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HISTORY OF MANCHESTER
MRS G. LINNÆUS BANKS.
THE MANCHESTER MAN
1876

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Bond Slaves

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THE MANCHESTER MAN
STUNG TO THE QUICK
CALEB BOOTH'S CLERK
WOOERS AND WINNERS
MORE THAN CORONETS
THROUGH THE NIGHT
THE WATCHMAKER'S DAUGHTER
FORBIDDEN TO WED
SYBILLA
IN HIS OWN HAND
GLORY
RIPPLES AND BREAKERS: POEMS

GRIFFITH FARRAN & CO.
39 *CHARING CROSS ROAD, LONDON*

Wm. William Andrews,
with the kind regards
of the Author,
Isabella Banks.
April/93.

BOND SLAVES

The Story of a Struggle

By

MRS. G. LINNÆUS BANKS

Author of
'God's Providence House' 'The Manchester Man
'Glory' 'In His Own Hand'
etc. etc.

LONDON
GRIFFITH FARRAN & CO.
NEWBERY HOUSE, 39 CHARING CROSS ROAD
1893

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PREFACE.

WHEN, in the year 1885 or 6, I undertook to write a Luddite story at the instance of a well-known publishing firm, it was my impression that I was pretty fairly equipped for the task. Previous studies had carried me over the ground; I had a tolerably good local library; had both visited and resided in Yorkshire; was connected with the county by family ties on both sides the house; and in my early home in Manchester was not merely familiarised with rioting, but with Luddite episodes of which history has made small account, and with the persons of chief actors therein.

For instance, the cap worn by the amateur Othello was embroidered for him by my own mother—then a girl in her fourteenth year—to resemble the one worn by Edmund Kean. Rioters forced themselves into the house of an aunt, pitched provisions out into the street, tore the gold rings from her ears, knocked her down, and would have trampled her to death but for the heroic bravery of a strong servant-woman, who strode across her mistress and kept the mob at bay. The husband was the aforesaid Othello, and had a post of trust and authority in a neighbouring factory. Then another sister of my mother had married a Yorkshireman from Halifax, a cousin had married a wealthy Yorkshire carrier, and another

a cloth merchant from Purlwell Hall, the very centre of the disaffected area. This gentleman, T. Tempest Taylor, being widowed, came to reside under our roof; and as a family connection, Mr. Joshua Ingham of Mirfield visited us occasionally, when the business of his bank brought him into the town. I was a little school-girl. My father was a strong politician, and any fresh grievance or outbreak among the operatives was certain to revive stories of bygone riots and outrages for animated discussion on our hearth, to all of which I listened with ears attent.

But when, so much later in life, I sat down to the task I had undertaken, I found I had so wide an area to cover that I needed much more than the discursive stories told by the fireside. I had the separate counties to connect, and to make myself better acquainted with not merely bygone topography, but with old processes of manufacture in different branches and trades, such as were common before machinery set hand labour aside. Fortunately I had had opportunities for observing these in many trades, both when I was young, and as I grew in years and moved from place to place.

Ill health speedily set a seal on researches at the British Museum; then I ransacked old book-dealers' catalogues, made heavy purchases, and laid Yorkshire friends, and comparative strangers, under contribution. I was surprised at the generous response. Rare books came to me in piles. Plans were drawn for me of places as they were in the past, and of which nothing otherwise existed. In one instance a parish map on a roller, a map drawn in 1797, was entrusted to me. Sketches were made to illustrate personal description. Correspondents borrowed books for me, else unattainable, and one or two were presented to me. Among the books lent was one which I have been permitted to retain until this day, one containing the 'Proceedings at the York Special Commission, January 1813,' as reported alike for Luke Hansard (official) and for the *Leeds Mercury*.

And, to show the interest taken over a wide area in my proposed romance of history, I may perhaps be allowed to give a list of those to whom my earnest thanks are tendered for help in one or other of these lines of research. The late Sir Edward Baines of the *Leeds Mercury*; Alderman Bairstow, ex-Mayor of Halifax; Mr. Bradley, stepson and successor to George Bickerdike, host of the 'Packhorse,' Huddersfield; Mr. J. Potter Briscoe, F.R.H.S., Chief Librarian of the Nottingham Public Libraries; Miss Brown, Huddersfield; Mr. W. Downing, Chaucer Head Library, Birmingham; the Rev. Marshall Hartley, B.A.; Mr. John Holmes, Roundhay, Leeds; Mr. William Smith, F.S.A.S., editor of *Old Yorkshire*; and Mr. Woodcock, bookseller, of Huddersfield.

It will be easily understood that it was not possible, with this access of material, so wide a geographical area to cover, and three separate bases of action, to confine my story within the narrow limits originally assigned to it. Overwhelmed with a mass of facts, I was compelled both to condense and to reject. Derbyshire I had to drop altogether, for there Luddism had a longer lease, under a different 'General,' who escaped the halter until 1817. As it is, I am doubtful whether the ordinary reader will thank me for overloading my thread of fiction with so many beads of indubitable history.

And to those who imagine the novelist's stock-in-trade to be merely pens, ink, paper, and imagination, I feel tempted to quote from the quaint preface Anthony-a-Wood affixed to his *History of Oxford*, in 1670: 'A painful work it is, I'll assure you, and more than difficult, wherein what toyle hath been taken, as no man thinketh, so no man believeth, but he that hath made the tryal.'

ISABELLA BANKS.

LONDON, 1893.

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BOOK THE FIRST

BOND SLAVES.

CHAPTER I.

A PROPHECY.

WHEN Walter Hartland married Marian Greenwood she was one of the prettiest girls in Arnold, ay, or within the wide range of Sherwood Forest, for that matter. She was the only daughter of a forester or under-keeper, who, in his attachment to ancient traditions, had named his first-born son Robin, his next John, and the girl who came between the two, Marian. And had not the rough-and-ready clergyman who baptized them seconded the remonstrances of Greenwood's common-sense wife, the three children would have gone forth to bear the burden of life additionally burdened from their baptism as Robin Hood, Maid Marian, and Little John.

Greenwood was a stalwart, robust man himself; Robin, also a woodsman, was fairly proportioned, with clear brown eyes and ruddy countenance; whilst Little John, whose poll and eyes bore a like tinge of chestnut, had about the same right to his prenomen as had his ancient prototype.

As for Maid Marian, neither in figure nor bearing could there be any trace of the bold and buxom bride of the noted outlaw. She did not set her foot down with the resolute tread of one born to command. She had rather learned the doctrine

of love and obedience, words now rapidly losing their joint and sweet significance. Slight and lissom as a willow-wand, she tripped along over the grassy ways lightly, as one who had no burden of care to carry. The 'windows of her soul' were blue and clear as summer skies, set well apart under thoughtful brows, and tenderly guarded by lids with a sensitive tendency to droop, as did the pitiful corners of her mouth when the pain or suffering of others touched her heart. There were lines in her face indicative of energy as well as strong affections, though the rounding fulness of youth softened any angularity that time or anxieties might develop. But the crowning glory of the village maiden was her wealth of flaxen hair that glinted in the light with just the faintest suggestion of yellow gold. Of this she was as proud as any lady in courtly circles; although she simply tied back her tresses with ribbons bought by her brother Robin or her sweetheart from travelling pedlars or at country fairs, perching above them a smaller and more coquettish cap than altogether satisfied her sober-minded mother. She, good woman, had for long years smoothed her own pale locks away under a matronly linen mutch with flapping ears or pinners, and sighed over the vanity of youth, whilst in secret proud of her girl's attractiveness. From that hard-working mother Marian had early learned to spin the wool of the Forest sheep into yarn for the use of the Arnold frame knitters and hosiers. But as machinery came into competition with the spinning-wheel, the girl found fresh employment for her busy fingers.

All frame-knitted hose being then woven flat, as the best stockings are to this day, the labour of the men found occupation for women as seamers, and as a seamer Marian worked for a hosier in Arnold, named Bolton, who had a number of frames at work under his own roof, besides others let out at a rental to men working for him in their own homes. To this Mr. Bolton, John had been apprenticed several years before her marriage, but he neither liked the work nor the close application demanded. Collisions between himself and his master were frequent; he was angry at his father for tying him down to an occupation so monotonous and irksome, and looked forward eagerly to the time when he might himself hire a frame, and work or play as best suited his own inclinations.

'It's not much work will be got out of you,' said his master

one day, in reply to his openly-expressed desire for freedom. 'You are the laziest lout that ever set foot on a treadle.'

'I wish they'd ne'er touched a treadle. My long legs warr ne'er meant to be cramped in a frame all day. Faither should'n ha' made a woodman or a frame-smith on me, an' then I'd ha' worked wi' a will. A lad's bound to doze wi' the croak of a corn-craik fur ever in his ears; gi' me th' tune o' hammer or axe to put spirit an' work in one. If I'm lazy, blame them as set me in a stocking frame, not me. Faither should'n ha' bound me to Mestur Wrigley, not to yow. I'd rayther make frames than work them.'

'Lazybones never lacks an excuse. Joe Wrigley and you are a pair. He slouches about and says he would rather work at a frame than set one up. You are the two laziest lads in all Arnold,' was Mr. Bolton's rebuke, as he turned away with the addendum, 'Your sisters shame you both with their industry.'

Arnold, now but one of the northern suburbs of Nottingham, was then a mere straggling village in a Forest clearing, and although the new highway to Mansfield ran pretty near, the waste of Thorney Wood spread for three or four miles between the town and village.

It was still sufficiently rural to find employment for a peripatetic tailor, who took up his temporary abode with his employers, sleeping in a loft or on the oaken settle, until the masculine wardrobes of the several families were set in order, whether by the making of new garments, the repair of damage in old ones, or the conversion of big cast-offs into brand-new suits for smaller bodies.

In villages where the rustics went to church in their smock-frocks there was not much new suit-making. Wedding garments or mourning suits were put by with perfumed lavender for use on rare occasions, to last a lifetime; if not to pass with other heirlooms to a successor. But Arnold, like other villages north of Nottingham, held a manufacturing population along with the agricultural, and in any case strong frieze, fustian, and hodden grey for hard wear needed replacing as well as broadcloth; and as Walter Hartland traversed a wide district, and only came round once a year, there was generally work for his shears and needle to keep him in the neighbourhood of Sherwood Forest six or seven weeks at a stretch.

He had good stout limbs and a hardy frame, and he needed both, for his own home was far away among the Yorkshire moors; and in addition to the ordinary tools of his trade—shears, goose, sleeve-board, and so forth—he carried with him a heavy pack of cloth on his back, though, to be sure, the latter gradually lightened as he went his rounds.

If he did not 'whistle as he went,' he whistled as he worked, a proof that he had a light heart as well as nimble fingers. And he had a tender heart withal, an inborn love for every living thing. It was this brought him first into contact with Marian Greenwood.

Some three years prior to the altercation between John Greenwood and Mr. Bolton, just recorded, Walter Hartland was sitting in his shirt sleeves cross-legged on a kitchen table by an open casement in the summer-time, when he heard a girlish voice say, 'Oh, don't, Jack!' in a tone of pitiful entreaty.

Lifting his head and bending sideways towards the window, he beheld not only a pretty flaxen-haired lass, about sixteen, but a great hulking lad, some couple of years younger, whose ruddy brown hair was all in a tangle, and he was amusing himself with the agonised gyrations of a suspended cockchafer spitted upon a pin, at the same time laughing heartily at the distress on the compassionate face of the girl.

'What odds!' cried the lad; 'it caun't feel. It's fun!'

Stretching his body out of the window, Walter Hartland, in angry indignation, ran his sharp needle into the fleshy part of the young scapegrace's arm.

Jack started, cried out lustily, 'Oh-h-h!' and dropped the buzzing cockchafer, on which the girl promptly put down her heavily-shod foot, as she said, 'to end the poor thing's misery.'

'What warr that fur?' growled young hopeful, rubbing the sleeve of his jacket up and down, and scowling defiance at the tailor. 'Dost think I'm made o' wood?'

'What? Did'st thou feel it?'

'Feel it, thou brute? Ay;' and the scowl deepened as the tailor further asked—

'Were you ever in the Squire's kitchen, my lad?'

'Ay, many a time!' snapped the youth; 'what'n o' that?'

'Then thou'll ha' seen th' lang iron spit as th' cook runs through geese an' such like for roasting?' assumed Walter, looking the angry lad in the face.

'Ay,' assented Jack surlily, still rubbing his uncomfortable arm.

'Well, suppose a giant twice as tall as yon poplar tree wur to run that spit through thee just for the fun o' seeing thee spin round and round in pain, dost think thou'd feel it?'

Jack looked askance. 'I'm a lad, not a buzzard. Them little things caun't feel.'

'So a monstrous giant mowt say to thee. But, Jack, if that's thy name, big or little, all living things feel pain. You wur a terrible giant to the cockchafer, the pin wur sharp and cruel as a big spit, an' the spinning an' buzzing you'd call fun mowt ha' told you as th' poor thing felt a million times moore pain than the bit of a prick I gave thy arm.'

'Dun yow think it did?' and Jack looked up with wide-open eyes, as if confronted with a new idea.

'To be sure it did, I telled you so,' put in the girl promptly.

'Sarve it reet then. The farmers wishes they warr all killed. Their grubs ruin th' crops afore they come up. Theere's been a regular plague on 'em down Mansfield way,' was his quick retort.

The humane tailor's answer was ready. 'Leave their nests an' eggs alone, and the birds will rid the farmers of the chafers. Don't you put them to torture, lest thy turn come some time or other.'

Another listener had come upon the scene, Joe Wrigley, the son of the frame-maker, for whom Hartland was then working. He was spare and lithe, even to his long thin fingers; his somewhat shifty eyes were a curious admixture of green and red, changing in the light like the 'shot silk' of a lady's dress, and were so closely set together as to infringe on the prominent ridge between them. His mother said his hair was 'sandy;' strangers pronounced it 'red;' his complexion took something of the same tint, and, it being then summer-time, there was a decided tendency to freckles. He carried a slate and school books in his hand, and wore a leather overall, called a 'jump,' to preserve his under-garments from hard usage.

'Nay, Wat Hartland, you're wrong. Th' farmers surely know more about birds and buzzards and their crops than a tailor. They'd ne'er pay for birds' eggs an' heads if the birds did no harm, and only killed the grubs and insects. Jack and

me have had many a threepence for birdnesting afore now,' said the new-comer, as if that was a conclusive argument.

'And so the farmers pay you for bird robbery and murder? I might have guessed as much from the strings of blown eggs on the wall;' and Wat glanced towards the nook where blue, brown, dappled, and speckled festoons told their own tale. 'If they were wise, they'd pay you to let the nests alone.'

Joe lifted his shoulders and laughed derisively, winking at Jack with those curious eyes of his.

'Thou'rt a foo'!' snarled the hulking lad called Jack over his shoulder, and the two boys marched off to enjoy their joke against the tailor and his crazy notions.

'I'm glad yow took them to task, sir,' then said the girl; 'our Jack and Joe Wrigley are always tormenting some poor helpless thing or other, an' it's no use me or mother speaking, for faither an' Robin only laugh at the excuses Joe has at his tongue's end. But they make me cry sometimes.'

'Thou'rt a kind-hearted lass,' observed the tailor, waxing his thread as he spoke; 'one may see it in thy face. I should like to know thy name, and who's Jack an' Robin, an' who's thy faither?'

'Dunna yow know? Faither's Greenwood the keeper. Jack and Robin are my brothers, an' they call me Marian. Yow're Mestur Hartland the tailor, I know that. Yow boxed our Jack's ears when he warr stinging my arms wi' nettles, first year as yow come to Arnold. I remember.'

'Oh! an' so yo're the pretty little lass I found crying in the Forest four years ago, wi' a young imp o' mischief whipping thy bare arms wi' nettles? Why, you have grown out o' mind a'moast. Shake hands, my lass!'

He left his busy needle in a seam whilst he extended his broad palm. She must have shown some hesitation, by his next remark.

'Nay, dunnot be afraid; it's a hard-working, honest hand, though I say it as shouldno. Thou needn't be ashamed to take it.'

Marian put out her hand to his good-will clasp half-shyly; he held it a moment, then, as he let it go, with a quick 'I maun be off,' she sped away with a swift foot and heightened colour towards Mr. Burton's with a bundle of stockings she had seamed, as if to make up for lost time.

And that was all the introduction needed by this country couple. A congenial chord had been struck, a kindly memory evoked. She recalled his timely interference gratefully, and he with the satisfaction that follows an act of protective impulse. The shyness and reticence, the formulas and etiquette of upper-class life do not reach the labouring and rustic strata.

He saw her again on the Sunday at the village church, and doffed his soft slouch hat to her with a word of recognition as they passed. This attracted the notice of Robin, and, he being a good-humoured fellow, the two readily drifted into conversation and acquaintance.

In a day or two Wat Hartland found his way in the twilight to the keeper's picturesque cottage of timber and plaster, though Jack sullenly held aloof, and long before he shouldered his pack again, he had found opportunity to say more than one sweet word to Marian.

A good deal of wooing may be compressed into a month if the swain be in earnest, but Marian was young, and he not in a foolish hurry, for it was then a time of war and revolution, and consequent pressure upon the poor. So it was not until 1793, when successive victories gained by our troops abroad (more especially the taking of Valenciennes and Toulon) were celebrated with bonfires and rockets, and a local newspaper prophesied a speedy termination of the war, that the pair ventured to take upon themselves the cares of matrimony.

Little thought they, and less thought the writer of that boastful paragraph, all he would be answerable for.

The news had been read out by the village clerk in the churchyard after service to the old folk seated under the yew trees,—these relics of bygone times when it was compulsory to plant yews in every churchyard, so that the men of England might never lack bow-wood for their archery,—and being so read out, the wonderful announcement came with all the force of an official proclamation, not only to the aged, but to the young, who listened with mouths agape and ears attentive.

Walter Hartland, who had reached Sherwood Forest earlier than ordinary that year, happened to be present at the reading, with Marian red as a rose by his side.

'Rare news them!' rang like a chorus in the open air, and the sanctity of the place barely restrained a loud hurrah.

Wat listened in silence, and remained thoughtful for some

time. At length, as they strolled slowly towards her forest home, he said, 'I think, Marian, if them news be true, thee an' me had best be wed. We han courted three years, an' since mother died faither says he's lost without a woman in th' house, an' her idle wheel's a sore trouble to him. He bade me bring my wife last summer; but I wur afraid to venture, lest the badness o' th' times should stop my needle altogether, and poverty came to thee through marrying me. An' I couldn't stand that, thou knaws.'

'I'd rather share poverty wi' thee than riches wi' some folk,' murmured she, clinging closer to his arm, and setting his heart beating its wildest. And he needed no telling who was meant by the 'some folk,' since Joe Wrigley followed her like her shadow, and the hammers in his father's smithy had clinked to a profitable tune.

'Well, Marian, it's only fur thee I've been feared. Theere's a good home an' a warm hearth ready fur thee any day. But faither's given up travelling, an' soon theere will be only me to depend on, fur he's getting old, an' must be takken care on. Yet thou heard as the war's gooin' to end, an' trade's sure to brisken up when the feightin's o'er. So if folk can live now when things are at theer worst, we can surely live when times are better.'

This was his argument, to which she and her people alike assented, though her mother was loth to give her up, and only yielded on Robin's hint that he had a sweetheart ready to supply his sister's place on their hearth.

A month or six weeks, whilst Wat finished his round, were all that Marian's few preparations demanded, during which time other 'glorious victories' were celebrated, with illuminations and fireworks. And in the autumn, when Marian was not much over nineteen, and Wat about twenty-six, when the tall foxgloves had run to seed, and the bracken was shrivelling up and turning brown, when the beech was yellow, the oak almost bare, and only the dark firs and yews were in their prime, the confiding young couple walked to Arnold Church in procession with her friends, with a fiddler in front, playing 'Haste to the wedding,' and capering to his own tune.

There was a feast at the crowded cottage, where the keeper's gun had helped to supply the pot, where the heartiness of welcome and rejoicing gave a zest to the entertainment, and

no one complained that the wooden trenchers were not china, or the drinking horns were not glass, or that there was an insufficiency of napery, knives, and forks for the great occasion.

Robin was in high glee, for his sweetheart, Nell Barker, shared the honours with the bride; John made himself useful and agreeable, the old father was hilarious, and only the anxious mother wore a serious and sorrowful face. Many were her counsels to the child she had reared for others, many the tears she shed at parting. But Wat was brimming over with love, hope, and confidence when Marian was seated on a pillion behind him on a stout galloway he had hired, to be borne away in triumph to take the place of his dead mother in his moorland home. And all on the strength of bonfires, and crackers, and newspaper predictions!

How were they to distinguish the false prophets from the true? Who was bold enough to cast a doubt on the verity of 'black print'?

CHAPTER II.

THE HOME ON THE MOORSIDE.

THE cottage of the Hartlands had stood alone in a sheltered nook of the wild moorland extending between Huddersfield and Halifax at a time when there were only packhorse tracks between the two thriving towns, and only a blind path from the common road served for the use of the inmates. That did not trouble them. What has never been known can never be missed. The house had been built solidly with native millstone grit, not squared to pattern, yet compactly put together, and well cemented to withstand the strong winds and the rain. High gables gave a good pitch to the flagstone roof to prevent the lodgment of snow, and above at one end rose a wide funnel-shaped chimney. And so it had braved the storms of a century or more, occupying ground where the adventurous Roman had, all unknown to the Englishman, built in the ages before him.

If there was only a ground floor and an upper, it was evident the builder had not been stinted for room. A goodly space around had been cleared and diligently cultivated, with what pains and patience there can be no telling. A sparkling mountain beck, that had its rise somewhere on the bleak mountain ridge called Blackstone Edge, danced and sang over the stones hard by as if rejoicing in its own freshness and purity. It might have sung an invitation to the original settler, there to abide and build for his own needs, and though a lean-to washhouse had been added since his day, and it was even then only a four-roomed dwelling, there had been and was a

certain air of substantiality about the whole when Walter Hartland invited Marian to make it her home.

'Now, Marian, thou'st a'moast left the Forest behind,' said Wat to his bride, as their steady-going roadster entered Mansfield with his double load, and stopped at the 'Royal Oak' as if he sniffed the atmosphere of a posting inn, and expected to be relieved and baited.

'Ah,' answered she, looking back, 'I may never see bonnie Birkdale again, but life goes forward, not backward, an' I can keep the picture in my mind if I ne'er see an oak or a birch again.'

'Ay, lass, so thou may. I hope thou wonnot pine fur them. Theere's moore stone than trees wheere't gooin'. But thou may see e'en in Mansfield here a lot o' folk ha' grubbed an' picked theer houses out o' th' sandy rock itsen, and live in them like snails in theer shells—'

'Well, so they dun i' some parts o' Nottingham,' interrupted she, as if that was no new thing; 'an' if they go on cutting down th' timber as they'n been doin' latterly, theere'll not be much o' Robin Hood's Sherwood left soon. Faither's rare an' mad o'er it.'

'An' so he's reight to be. Robin Hood loved the woods. I'll tak' you some day to see his grave at Kirklees, if yo're a good walker. Yo're not leaving th' land o' Robin Hood if yo're going to th' land o' stone an' heath. An' we han some woods here an' theere. But yo're not on th' threshold o' th' land o' stone yet. Wait till we han crossed the corner o' Darbysheer, an' come nigher Sheffieldt. I'm 'feared thou'll be daunted an' miss the waving trees an' th' singing birds thou's been reared amang when thou reaches the bare moors.'

'I shall miss nowt wi' thee!' said she confidently, as if not to be scared by his forebodings, and with a sweet smile that was assurance to him.

'Hegh, Marian! but them's sweet words. I mun try an' mak' up to thee in other ways fur a' thou'st left fur me;' and he pressed her warm hand in token of sincerity.

It was well he had prepared her mind for a thorough change of scene, since what we now regard as grand and picturesque was then felt to be repulsive and horrid, even to educated and poetic beholders.

The Highway Act of 1773 had provided them with turnpike

roads to journey along, but their condition was none of the best, and as they crossed a wide grassy moor on the way to Chesterfield, where posts were set up along the overgrown track as guides to travellers, he could feel her clinging closer to him. But they were crossing the best-cultivated corner of Derbyshire, and, as Wat had said, it was not until grimy Sheffield was left behind that she realised the contrast between the scenes she had left and those she was approaching.

It was not that country seats, parks, woods, and cultivated farms were not to be seen here and there dotting the landscape on either hand as they proceeded, but there was a constant cropping up of bare rock, the green wayside hedges seemed to disappear, and walls of uncemented stone rose as boundaries between field and field, and there were long rugged tracts that never felt the plough, where gorse and heather and coarse grass had alone possession of the soil. The whitewashed cottages, covered with brown or amber thatch, the black and white timber-and-rubble halls and farmhouses, had given place to huts and houses alike of stone, with something bare and blank in the set of doors and windows. There were no trellised porches, no broad window-sills, the very mullions and roofs were of stone or slate. Huddersfield itself, though it had been for centuries a chartered market town, was but a small, dirty, uninteresting place, on the banks of a shallow river in a romantic and picturesque valley. It was only just awakening from a long sleep to a consciousness of busier life and its own capabilities. Modern Huddersfield was not created.

Marian had made up her mind to look on the bright side of the future, yet it must be confessed her heart did sink a little when the town was left behind, and he pointed to the high purpled moorland beyond as their destination, all looked so bleak, and blank, and desolate. True, cultivation had begun on the lower lands, and there were grey hard-angled houses and rude hovels scattered on the hillsides, but they were few and far apart, and she wondered where would be their neighbours.

Walter took her silence for weariness, and grew talkative to keep her alive; but having dismounted to spare the horse, as the narrow path ascended and became toilsome, he had to save his own breath for the ascent.

They turned the corner of a grassy knoll, a building of some

sort loomed before them. The silence was broken by the barking of a rough white dog that came bounding to meet them, and almost drowned the voice of Wat with his welcome.

'Here we are at last!' said he, stopping at a gap in a wall which did duty for a gate. 'Look up at thy new home an' tell me how thou likes it.'

He lifted her down as he spoke, and, giving her a kiss and a hug as a preliminary welcome, added, 'Now hie thee in, faither's waiting,' and stooped himself to pat the obstreperous dog.

What Marian Hartland saw before her in the strong light of the westering sun was a weather-beaten dark grey edifice, tinted with red and yellow patches of lichen alike on the stony roof and walls; a broad casement window in five divisions on the level, with a row of beehives on a stand beneath; a smaller window under the broad eaves, with the sunlight dancing redly upon thick diamond panes set in lead; and standing on the well-worn outer step a white-haired, hale old man, with kindly face and outstretched arms, and a brisk 'Welcome hoam, my good lass! Thou's come noan too sooin.'

What she saw when he led her in was a clean stone floor, worn and irregular, a bright fire of turf and coal burning on the primitive hearth, a steaming iron pot suspended by a hook and chain above it, walls newly whitewashed to receive her, and decorated with three or four marvellously coloured pictures (painted on the underside of glass), which to her seemed gorgeous. Her eye, well pleased, took in the strong big table under the window, with an unfinished coat upon it; a great oaken coffer or chest against the opposite wall, with a trencher shelf above it; the oaken lang-settle by the hearth, on which she was invited to rest; a corner cupboard left open to show its stores of crockery; a deal table in the centre, whereon were laid knives, forks, platters, and dishes, without the ceremony of a cloth. A few oaken chairs, with clumpy legs and high straight backs, were ranged here and there, a Dutch clock ticked in one corner, and overhead, suspended from the thick rafters, a bread-flake[1] well filled with oaten cake, to say nothing of bunches of herbs and onions, a goodly half-side of bacon, and two great lumps of hung beef, salted and dried for winter use.

[1] A square wooden frame with lines of cord across, over which the soft cakes hung to grow crisp.

All promised well, from the hearty welcome of the old man, which had almost taken her breath, to the evidence of comfort and plenty around. The home she had left could not compete with this, however bleak and barren might be the aspect without.

Eyes and lips alike proclaimed her satisfaction, as she threw back her hood and loosed the clasp of her warm grey duffel cloak, whilst resting on the settle and answering the questions of her father-in-law, then busy stirring the contents of the pot with a long ladle.

'Ay, ay, my lass, we're pretty warm and snug here; th' house turns its back on th' cold nor'-east winds, an' so we gets a' th' afternooin sun reight in at th' winders. Th' wind cooms roughish about here, an' we need good stout walls, an' th' moors are rough under foot, an' th' folk are rough too, but we're hearty, my lass, an' we're upreight and downreight, an' says what we means. Yo might ha' gone farrer and fared worse than takin' up wi' our Walter; he's true as steel, and he's as tender a heart under his waistcoat as yo han.'

'I know it,' assented Marian proudly, 'or I'd ne'er ha' been here.'

Just then her husband, who had been temporarily stabling the horse somewhere in the rear, came into the house through a door beyond the coffer, and, turning her head over her shoulder, she caught a glimpse of a small kitchen behind. He had on his shoulders the big pack containing her belongings, and, calling to her, 'Come up-stairs, Marian,' led the way up a flight of stone steps partially hidden by a wooden screen at the far end of the room, opposite to the fireplace.

The space over the large living-room had been converted by a doorless wooden partition into a couple of bedrooms; but she made no comment on the slope of the roof, coming within four feet of the floor on either hand, or of the need for a door. From end to end it was higher than the loft in which she and her brothers had slept, and the solid partition was certainly better than the old patchwork quilt that had done duty for a screen in the forester's abode. She passed the small low window in the first compartment without a word, but when she found a larger and clearer window in the far gable, with a sort of home-made table under it, and a small new looking-glass upon it, which she knew was for herself, she clasped her hands

in her delight, and, forgetting all about the dreary waste of moor around, exclaimed—

'Oh, Walter, this is beautiful! We shan be so happy here. All is so snug, an' clean, an' comfortable, an' yowr faither is so kind!'

'Ay, love, so he is. I'm glad your home's to your first liking. But it's folk as makes a home happy, not the heawse nor furniture.'

'Ay, lad, so it be; but I'll do my share if thou'll do thine, an' I've no fear.'

We may guess how she was answered, as she turned to hang her cloak on a nail, and, after a brief look at the distant prospect from the window of scattered homesteads dotting the wild moor, with glimpses of the town, and the winding river Colne, and the higher mountain ridges on the south-west, over which the setting sun shed a crimson glow, went down to feast on bacon and cabbage in the brightest of moods; and if at first the oatcakes had a strange rough taste to her, she said, with a smile, it was 'quite as good as blencon-bread;[1] she should soon learn to like it.'

If she had been taught to write, and postage had been cheap, she might have sent a glowing account of her new home to the people in the rude timber and plaster cottage she had left, even though the aspect of the barren moorlands chilled her, and contrasted drearily with the woods and glades of 'bonnie Sherwood.'

But it so happened neither she nor her good husband knew how to use a pen. He could spell through an easy chapter in his father's Bible; had in his journeyings to and fro learned from observation many of nature's secrets, and he made his trade calculations in some mysterious fashion of his own, but he could not so much as sign the name he inherited, since education does not altogether come by inheritance.

Hitherto Marian had not felt her own ignorance; in her sphere writing was deemed an idle, if not mischievous, superfluity for a woman, even in the next generation, and but for the desire to relieve her mind to her mother of all its overflowing wonder and delight, she might not have felt her ignorance a drawback at all.

[1] Blend-corn bread was a mixture of barley, rye, and wheat, common then in Notts.

She had, however, other accomplishments more likely to commend themselves to her husband and his father. She could wash and scrub, spin, knit, and sew, and cook a homely dinner, and could do it without a racket. And she understood the management of bees and poultry, both of which added to the comfort of the moorside home.

Old Dame Hartland's spinning-wheel stood silent and empty at the far end of the long living-room, by the stairs, and Marian often caught the eyes of the old man resting ruefully upon it as he lifted his head from his work.

'If I'd only some wool I could make that wheel useful. I didn't come here to be idle,' said she, after she had been there three days.

'Say you so, my lass? Why, that's better than I expected. Thou shall have the woo' next market day,' exclaimed the old man in the very best of humours, foreseeing a profitable inmate in his son's young wife. 'An' if thou can spin long woo' combings, theer'll be folk enow to gi' thee work and pay thee well; wayvers conna get weft fur t' keep theer looms agooin', an' they ha' not made a machine to comb or spin worsted yet, an' it caun't be done. So thou's sure o' wark, Marian;' and the old fellow chuckled until he ran his needle in his thumb.

Walter was pressing the high collar of a thick topcoat. 'I did hear when I wur i' Nottingham, as a man named Pottle had made a machine for combing worsted,' said he, drawing out his words slowly, owing to his pressure on the heated goose.

'Nowt o' th' soart, lad, nowt o' th' soart! I'se heerd nowt on it. Annyhow, it's noan got to Huddersfeldt. But them wool-combers are lazy, drunken chaps, an' it 'ud sarve them reight if it did. Happen you'll hear on it in th' market o' Tuesday if it be true.'

'Ay, or when I take this topcoat hoam,' put in the son. 'Theere's moore talk i' John Wood's cropping shop than in a' the market.'

'Cropping shop?' exclaimed Marian, then busily footing a grey woollen stocking for the old man, looking up from her knitting without stopping her twinkling needles. 'Is that the barber's?'

'Hegh! bless thy innocent heart, noa. A cropping shop's the pleace wheere th' cloth is takken by th' wayvers to be

finished. Thou could pick threads through it when it comes from the loom. It has to be fulled, an' dyed, an' burled, an' what not. In th' cropping shops they raise the fluffy pile like a blanket, wi' teazles stuck in a soort o' paddle wi' a handle. Then they crop it all off again wi' shears lang as thy arm, not like these things.' The old man held up his tailoring shears as he explained further, 'Cropping shears are not riveted together like these nor like a hedger's, they han round hinges at the top like thisn, an' the blades go broader down to th' cutting end thisn's.'

He illustrated his speech by a rude drawing on the shop-board with his lump of chalk.

'They mun be reight-down heavy and clumsy to handle,' cried Marian, watching the tracing on the board.

'Thou may weel say that,' put in her husband; 'hands alone won't sarve. The men han to rest th' shears agen theer thighs, an' fur a' that the round springy nogs raise hoofs on theer wrists. It is hard wark. Sweat pours off the cropper till he's dry as a flaight [1] and feels bahn to goo an' drink. Some o' th' maisters find th' men drink, to mak' them stick to their wark. Bud it's weel paid—an' it need be.'

Here his father broke in with, 'I say, Wat, didst know John Wood's wedded Mellor's widder sin' thou went away? He said that lad of hers, George, wur to han a new suit o' cloathes. Happen he'd gie thee t' order if thou wur to ax.'

'I dunnot like that lad George Mellor. His own faither couldno manage him, an' he'll soon ha' th' upper hand o' John Wood. He's fierce, and cruel, and masterful as an unbroken colt!'

'That's nowt to thee, Wat. Tak' th' lad's measure if step-faither be willing, an' don't quarrel wi' thy bread and cheese. George's masterfulness is nowt to thee.'

Nothing to him? Ah, blind old man!

[1] Flaight—a square of peat turf for fuel.

CHAPTER III.

GOING TO MARKET.

THICK grey mist lay on the heathery moors, and blotted out the high ridge of England's stony backbone from their horizon, when, at half-past six by the Dutch clock, Walter Hartland and his wife went down the garden path equipped for their walk to Huddersfield market on the Tuesday morning; she in her grey duffel cloak, with the hood drawn over her new straw bonnet, and he in a long drab topcoat that had done service for many a good year.

The little weather-wise man and woman at the top of the Dutch clock had stood trembling and hesitating which should leave the shade of their bright red house, but finally the lady's parasol was seen to emerge, and a fine day was prognosticated, though the morning mist was almost as damp and chilly as rain.

'I think we've got everything,' said Walter, as he led the way, with a great well-covered parcel carried packwise on his shoulder, and a thick stick in his hand. 'You must follow me carefully, for the road's rough and uneven, and strange feet are like to trip.'

'I've got th' basket, if that's whatn thou means,' responded Marian, drawing her cloak closer together. 'Rough? I think it is. How thou finds th' way is a puzzler, for thou canno see two yards afore thee.'

'Hegh, lass! I could find th' road blindfold, tho' th' mist's apt to bewilder one. It'll clear up afore we reach Huddersfeldt.'

If it had not cleared up, they had left it behind on the hill-

tops when they gained the main road, there spanned by the Out Lane toll-gate, and found others travelling the same way, lean, wiry men with heavy packs and pieces of cloth upon their shoulders, women with baskets on their heads, here a horseman with saddle-bags, there another with pack and packsaddle, and more than one small cart laden with commodities for sale, besides mules with panniers of coals and flaights, as the squares of peat were called.

Walter Hartland was well known, and when the mist began to clear away, there were homely greetings from travellers bound the same way, whether mounted, or, like themselves, trudging along the footpath high above the horse track. One or two of the hearty manufacturers accosted him, asked if that was the wife he had brought home, complimented her on her good looks and him on his taste, wished the pair much happiness, and rode on, leaving Marian's cheek crimson with their observation.

The town they were approaching bore no manner of proportion or relation to the Huddersfield of this day, or indeed of this century. It was small in area. The sky was clearer; there were no tall factory chimneys belching forth smoke, for steam had not yet been called in to work a revolution in its manufactures; hand labour and water power had so far served the master's purposes, though there were already whisperings of change. There was no railway with its marvellous viaduct, no infirmary for the sick in body, and but one church for the sick in soul. Men and lads—ay, and women—clattered about the streets in wooden clogs, often with greasy woollen aprons and bare arms, or with the bare arms and the aprons stained blue, or red, or brown, as the case might be.

And, alack for sensitive stomachs and noses! the air was redolent of size, ammonia, and other odours unmentionable. For though the workshops and houses did not elbow and jostle each other too closely, piggeries were frequent, and the refuse of sties, etc., then went into open receptacles for the use of cloth-dressers.

The 'gospel of sweetness and light' had not then been propagated, and the only sanitary commissioners were the strong mountain breezes that swept the valley from west to east.

Entering Huddersfield from the then only north road, by

the Northgate, as it was called, they skirted the Beast-market, already in a commotion with shouting drovers and bellowing black cattle, and, keeping close to the irregular line of houses, turned the sharp corner on their right, into the main thoroughfare, which crossed the town from east to west, and, in fact, formed the northern boundary; little but green fields and pasturage, with a sprinkling of mountain ash and a few conifers then showing on the rugged slopes beyond, now thick with clustering habitations. There, at the eastern or Kirkgate end, they came to a standstill under the shadow of St. Peter's hoary parish church, which, like many another such edifice, owed its foundation to a vow made by a Norman knight in peril. He floundered out of a deep morass, and left this holy fane as a testimony of his piety and gratitude.

We, offspring of a more enlightened civilisation, talk flippantly of the monkish superstition of those dark and degraded days; but of the specially miraculous deliverances from flood, or fire, or railway collision, of which our daily papers tell, how few leave grateful monuments in stone like this of Sir Walter De Lacy. Yet when he set quarrymen and masons at work on the desolate hillside overlooking the little river, he could have no prevision how priestly or secular needs would draw around the builders a host of chapmen and others to supply their natural wants of food and raiment, or how the nucleus of a town would arise coeval with St. Peter's shrine; still less would he foresee for how many centuries that petrifaction of his vow would stand erect within its sacred acre, a hoary sentinel keeping watch over generations of sleepers, and pointing upwards with the solemn finger of its spire[1] to the heaven above the dust, where grateful piety counts for more than knighthood.

Under the shadow of the ancient church Marian and Wat came to a standstill, for they wished to cross the road, and it was blocked, but the very stoppage had its interest for her.

The demolition of projecting buildings on both sides, and a little filching from the churchyard, on the wall of which Wat rested his package, has since opened out a wide passage between the Beast-market and the Kirkgate, but then it was so cramped that two vehicles could not pass, and at that moment the newly established and solitary stage-coach that passed

[1] Spire replaced by a tower in 1836.

through Huddersfield on its way from Manchester to Leeds and Newcastle, was on the move to get clear of the town with all speed.

It had stopped, as was its wont, to change horses and refresh passengers at an inn almost opposite to the church, with a painted packhorse for its sign, and, being a novelty, naturally attracted a crowd of gazers besides the Hartlands. Passengers, driver, guard were on their seats, the guard's horn was blown, the burly coachman shook his reins, the ostlers released the horses' heads, and away went the four steeds, to be pulled back almost on their haunches. A carrier's waggon stood in the gap. A little lively conversation ensued between the waggoner and the coachman; whilst the former whipped up his weary beasts into the wider thoroughfare.

The coach rolled on with its load of unknown joys and sorrows, leaving behind only an outside passenger, an ingenious blacksmith or machinist named Enoch Taylor, who had been taken up at Marsden on the stony Lancashire border.

The laden waggon from Halifax was then wheeled under the covered gateway of the 'Packhorse;' an intelligent face peered from under its tilt; in less than three minutes John Baines, the middle-aged owner of the face, emerged from the gateway with a string of pasteboard hat-boxes in either hand, and came full tilt against the younger traveller, who had his eyes upon the ground as if lost in some calculation.

'Nah, then! Look afore thee wi' thy boxes,' cried the latter sharply, pulling himself together.

'Look afore thee,' retorted the other, with no attempt at apology, 'an' keep a better look-out; or you may happen run your head against something harder than a hat-box one of these days. The road's as free for one man as another.'

This hatter and this blacksmith came into momentary collision, strangers meeting and parting for the first time—and the last; unknowing, and unknown. And as little did they dream of clashing proclivities and practical antagonism, as did the newly-married couple, resting by the churchyard wall, suspect how their destiny hung in a balance between those two men whom they might never behold again.

The coincidence of the chance meeting was nothing uncommon. Men meet and jostle on the highways and byeways of life, and pass on unconscious that fate has woven

their future into the same web; that the life or fortune of the one hangs on word or act of the other.

Marian, observant of all that was passing around her, just saw the accidental encounter, and smiled as the young man strode on, immersed in thought, without another word, whilst the more discomposed elder rearranged his hat-boxes, and, muttering as he went, passed the open door of the 'Packhorse,' and entered that of the 'Ramsden Arms,' the middle inn of three standing side by side to provide the 'good accommodation for man and beast' so very necessary then and there. But she was quite as much interested in watching the shoal of thin, weary-looking, ill-clad men, carrying huge packs on head or shoulders, mingled with others who had four-footed beasts of burden to bear their loads of cloth, and maybe themselves also, who all seemed to turn off from the narrow outlet by the sharp corner downhill, opposite to the church, whilst better-mounted, better-fed, and better-dressed horsemen, whether gaitered or top-booted, rode straight onward, along the crowded Kirkgate, unless they alighted at one of the three convenient inns.

Her observation shaped itself into a question.

'Oh,' answered Wat, 'that's Church Street reight opposite. It's the handiest road to th' Cloth Hall. Yo may see wheer they torns round at the bottom o' th' hill into King Street. Well, the Cloth Hall's reight afore them. Gentry as can afford to ride—maisters, marchants, wool-staplers, and such as han gooid beasts under them, an' nowt but theersens to carry—may ride straight on to the grand inns, such as them afore yo, or th' "George," facing the Market-place, or th' "Plough" in Westgate farther on, no matter how thrang th' road may be with market-folk; but th' poor wayvers as have heavy loads on their shoulders or their galloways goa th' nighest an' clearest road they con to get rid o' theer packs. It's time enoof when th' cloth or blanketting's a' reight on th' counters, fur th' wayvers to goa an' wet theer whistles, or put up theer galls afore th' cloth-market begins in the Hall, an' a lot o' them coom to th' "Packhorse" here, as has th' biggest yard an' stabling. It goas reight through into King Street.'

'But whatn *is* the Cloth Hall? an' why are they all gooing theere?' she asked. 'Is it loike th' Malt Cross i' Nottingham?'

'Noa,' was his reply; 'it's a fine seet bigger. Th' Malt

Cross is nowheere ! That's nobbut a lot o' pillars set on steps, with a roof to cover them. Thou mun see th' Cloth Hall afore we goa hoam. It wur built by Sir John Ramsden, a great mon hereabouts, a year or two after I wur born. But they ha' put another storey atop on it to make it bigger. Folk as are gooing theere are wayvers, wi' piece goods to sell, and buyers from Manchester, an' London, an' Leeds, an' other places, merchants and dealers they call themselves, an' there'll be master fullers, an' dyers, an' shearers, hanging about to get work or orders. It's a fine big place, as round as a ring, and hasno been finished more nor a dozen year or so. Afore it wur first built, them as had cloth to sell laid their pieces on th' churchyard wall when the market bell rang at eight o'clock, an' all as wasn't sold by twelve had to be carried off again. Nobody could bid a price or take it after th' bell rang to close th' cloth-market at noon.'

'That warr rather hard, warn't it?'

'Well, thou sees, they might goa to an inn an' sattle a bargain if th' price had been fixed; but nobody was allowed to bid a price or bate one, except in th' open market, an' afore twelve.'

They had crossed the road to the 'Packhorse' as he spoke. There he made an inquiry for Mr. John Wood, and was told—

'You are too soon, my man. Mr. Wood will not be here for half an hour or more. Will you go into the taproom and wait?'

'Not this time, thank yo,' replied Wat, turning to Marian and saying, 'Coom along, lass, you may as well see it now. I want some needles, both ground-dahns and betweens, an' I mun leave my shears wi' Aminadab Wright to be ground, an' his shop's in Cloth Hall Street. But there's noa need to goa round by Church Street; our nighest way's reight through th' "Packhorse" yard here.'

So saying, he led the way through the wide gateway, overbuilt with sleeping-rooms for the substantial inn, and on through the long stable-yard, now one of the things of the past, modern warehouses having risen on the site.

Then the open area was more than two hundred yards in length; there were stalls to accommodate a hundred horses, with granaries in proportion; there was housing for post-chaise

or private carriage; space for farmer's cart or carrier's waggon; and, on their right, a flight of outside steps led to a spacious room for balls, or puppet-shows, or sermons. Other times, other manners. The locomotive has displaced the packhorse, the railway station has superseded the vast inn-yard.

That early morning Marian was all amazement to see, besides the carrier's waggon, a second, one or two gigs, and any number of galloways turning into one or other of the stables, whilst ostlers and lank countrymen seemed to swarm.

She was not sorry when out at another gateway they passed into King Street, and the circular red brick Cloth Hall stood before them in the distance, at the far end of the street which bore its name. There Walter made his call at the ironmonger's, and, after consulting the clock over the entrance of the great commercial hall, they made its windowless circuit, and, mounting the steps, Marian looked in through the open doors on its long avenue, with ranges of stout tables or counters, where piles of cloth, dressed and undressed, were rapidly accumulating, and buyers were already turning over the tab ends. It was another novel sight to Marian, fresh from a Forest village.

Thence they took their way up Market Street (far enough from the Market-place, though parallel with it), and turned into Westgate, the westerly continuation of Kirkgate, a quaint, old-world thoroughfare, where fine new houses of brick rose and overtopped their elderly companions of solid stone, or decrepit ones of timber.

As they passed the 'Plough' in Westgate, an active, energetic young fellow rode up, called 'Hostler!' before he had well brought his horse to a standstill, and was out of the saddle without troubling the horse-block, almost as soon as the ostler had his hand on the bridle. Wat touched his hat in passing, and the other, after a rapid glance at his companion, smiled and nodded in recognition as he ran up the steps of the inn.

'Who's thatn?' asked Marian.

'Why, he's Maister Wilfred Wainwright o' Greenfolds, a cloth-finisher, an' one o' thoose as is not content wi' th' owd mak's o' things, but is fur trying summat out o' the common way. I hope it may answer. My faither warked fur hisn when he wur first breeched. He's a likely soart o' chap, but they say he's a will o' his own.'

By this time they had jostled and wound their way amongst the busy throng the day called into the town, as far as the Market-place. On their left, the 'George Inn,' a commanding, lofty, many-windowed edifice, overlooked the open Market-place which lay on the opposite or southern side of Kirkgate.

A fine-looking, well-dressed young man of twenty-four or twenty-five, who wore drab leggings and had a riding-whip in his hand, was standing on the broad steps of the inn, and saluted him in passing.

'So, Hartland, you've ventured on a wife in spite of the hard times?'

'Well, Maister Horsley, th' papper said as th' feighting wur well-nigh ower, an' times would mend.'

'Ah, my good man, I wish the newspapers always spoke the truth. The war's not likely to come to an end just yet. But if your wife's as good as she's good-looking, I don't wonder you took the risk.'

'She is that,' replied Wat, with all the bridegroom's commendable pride in his choice, whilst Marian crimsoned and looked embarrassed at the outspoken praise: 'an' happen you may gie me an order, Maister Horsley, for a new coat or summat, just to reduce the risk.'

The young fellow laughed at Wat's business-like promptness in the adaptation of his remark, showing a firm, strong set of teeth, in a mouth as firm and strong. Indeed, his whole bearing betokened self-reliance and resolution, with perhaps a dash of foolhardiness.

'These are not times to indulge in extravagance,' was his amused reply; 'but if an order for a new garment can lessen the risks of matrimony, why, in Hymen's name, bring your measuring-tape to Marsden, and there shall be cloth for the cutting.'

'That's young Maister Horsley of Marsden,' said Walter to his rosy-cheeked wife, as, with a 'Good morning, sir, and thank you,' they walked on. 'He's gone into partnership with his brother, an' whatever the times may be, they're for pulling down th' old mill as sarved Abram Horsley, their faither, for many a long year. An' they talk o' putting up a new un, bigger than th' faither has now. Hegh! an' I did hear they wur fur getting some soart o' new machine as would work without hands, same as Maister Wainwright. 'Twill be bad fur poor folk if they dun.'

Young Mr. Horsley still kept his station on the steps, looking after the Hartlands as they moved away, and flicking his leggings with his whip in reflective mood.

The other gentleman whom Wat had recognised, and who was about Mr. Horsley's age, with features equally strong and determined, came up at that moment, riding-whip in hand, and saluted the one on the steps with a hearty 'Good morning, Horsley.'

'Look, Wainwright,' said the other, 'at yonder couple. Hartland, the travelling tailor, has ventured on a wife these hard times, on the shadowy prospect of peace; whilst you and I stand shilly-shallying on the brink of matrimony, afraid to make the plunge. What say you? Is his the folly, or ours? I feel tempted to follow his example; it's infectious.'

'What? With your mill unbuilt, your machinery unbought, the result unknown?' The new-comer shook his head sagely, not observing the irony in the other's tone. 'I'm not so rash. You and I are both young enough to wait, and women unwilling to wait for us till we make our footing sure are not worth having. But I forgot—you have father and uncle both to back you up. I must plod on a few years before I dare think of enlarging my premises or taking a wife. I should do my dear Kate a wrong to link her life to an uncertainty. And she is not the girl I take her for if she be unwilling to wait.'

'And you would first see how my experiments succeed before you make the trial, hey? I'm afraid, Wainwright, you have neither the faith nor the courage of yon poor travelling tailor, who has taken a wife to his bosom and board, and trusts the future to his needle and thread. And the rascal looked so confoundedly happy, it set a fellow envying. But come along, if you're for the Cloth Hall.'

The two set off arm-in-arm, Mr. Wainwright continuing the conversation.

'Men of his class rarely look far ahead. They link their lives with others, caring little for consequences. Hartland's father worked for mine when I was a lad, and I heard in the town here of the son's contemplated marriage. He had better reasons than some for the step. Since the old woman died, the father has been left much alone in the solitary house, and Wat no doubt felt the need of a companion for both, to say nothing of washing, baking, scrubbing, and so on. And I hear

the young wife can both knit and spin, so he has not mated unwisely. But you and I, Horsley, have no such excuse. Our homes are not ready made, and as enterprising men we need our capital for our business. It would be madness for me to embarrass myself with a load of domestic responsibilities until my business is placed on a firm basis.'

'But I understood Joshua Ingham's cousin had money; surely that would help you uphill, and secure your position.'

'Do you think I'd take a shilling of Miss Thornicroft's portion for such a purpose? I should be a rascal to risk her little fortune on the untried. No, no; I must see my way clear before I plunge into matrimony.'

'Ah, well, your blood must be cooler than mine. I don't think I shall keep single many months. I've no notion of dangling after a girl for years. It's hardly fair, to my mind.'

'Perhaps not,' half-assented Mr. Wainwright, with a momentary compression of his lips and a hard breath through his nostrils; 'but, as I said before, we are differently situated. My blood is not always cool, but I am neither so rash nor selfish as to take advantage of a girl's affection when I could only wed her to anxieties. But here we are, and there stands Enoch Taylor, the blacksmith, in close confab with Bradley. Is he going to have the new machinery?'

Leaving the pair to separate on the crowded steps of the Cloth Hall, where weavers coming in late with their heavy and cumbersome packs jostled merchants, wool-staplers, and finishers, in their haste to secure a spare counter within on either side the broad aisle, then thronged with whispering buyers, we must hurry to overtake our humbler friends.

CHAPTER IV.

PUT TO THE TEST.

DR. HORSLEY'S promise had put Walter into the best of spirits. He chatted gaily to Marian as they pursued their short course along the Kirkgate, until they were again close to the 'Packhorse,' where he had instructions to meet his father's customer.

It was a busy, bustling place on market days, as we have shown; ostlers and stablemen were hard at work in and out, and from the yard came the sounds of neighing and trampling steeds, the clank of harness and pails, the swish of water, and the mingling of oaths with the sibilations inseparable from the application of the currycomb.

Turning once more into the wide gateway, Wat almost ran against a dark-eyed, close-browed lad about ten years old.

'Now, then, gawky! Look where you're going!' cried the lad sharply.

'Hegh, Maister George! is it thee? Is thy faither here?'

'Mr. Wood's here, if you mean him,' was the curt answer.

'Will yo please tell him I've browt his new topcoat,' said Wat, as he walked forward, followed by Marian, towards a well-sanded common room reeking of stale tobacco and abundantly supplied with copper spittoons, the door of which opened on the stable-yard.

'Tell him yoursen. I'm no tailor's goose to go hissing where you drive me!' And with a scornful laugh, George Mellor ran out into the street.

There was no one in the room but a carter in a smock-

frock. Wat set his package on one of the long tables not already marked with wet rings of ale.

'Here, Marian,' said he, 'sit down on this bench an' wait fur me. Yon lad's no more heart than my gooise, an' no more manners than our Pincher. I've spoiled his cruel sport moore than once; an' he happen owes me a grudge.'

Presently he came back with a mug of ale in his hand and said, 'Mr. Wood's busy with a customer in the bar parlour; so open thy basket an' let's have a bite o' bread and cheese. A long morning walk seems to sharpen one's teeth.'

They had finished their early luncheon when in came Mr. John Wood, much more civil than his stepson. He was a short, stiff man, somewhere between thirty and thirty-five, with light curly hair, close thin lips, and furtive grey eyes,—a man who could keep his own counsel and look well to his own interest, as it was said he had done in marrying the widow Mellor, who had brought him something of more account than an unruly boy.

Wat opened his package, and as Mr. Wood outstretched his arms in trying on the new overcoat, it was plain to see, from the horny excrescence on his wrist, shaped like a hoof, that he was a master who had been originally a journeyman, if he did not continue to work alongside his men.

As Wat had said, this hoof was formed by the pressure of the arched nog or spring of the shears as the huge blades were gradually brought together by main force and the help of the right thigh, in shearing or cropping the surface of cloth across its width, as it lay on the cropping-board; and when once formed, this hoof served as a guide for the shears. It was the cropper's sign-manual.

After John Wood had walked into the snug bar parlour, separated from the glass-case bar itself by a partition surmounted by a green curtain on a brass rod, in order to consult the smart barmaid and the looking-glass respecting the fit of the garment, he returned to the taproom stroking his left sleeve, evidently as well pleased with the cloth, finished under his own eye, as with the tailoring.

There was no haggling about price; that had been fixed beforehand. Mr. Wood took a canvas bag from his pocket to pay for the work, and then Walter asked if he did not require a suit for his son.

'Son? my wife's son, you mean. Ay! he would ruin one in clothes. He is only fit to wear a leather jump. He tears his things off his back with one wild prank or other. And if I raise my stick to the young vagabond, his mother cries as if I meant to kill her lad. "Spare the rod and spoil the child," is my maxim. As I tell her, he'll come to the gallows some day, if she humours him as she does.'

Walter glanced at Marian, to whom he had made a similar remark over their bread and cheese, and John Wood sallied forth in search of his ungovernable stepson, so that he might be measured there and then.

He found him watching a dog-fight, in high glee at the worrying a cur was getting from a bull terrier. He was brought back by the ear and ordered to stand still whilst he was being measured.

The promise of a new suit would have secured the attention of most boys of his age; but George had never known the want of clothes, and was more interested in the dog-fight. He was restless and impatient to be gone. Once or twice he was for darting off before the measurements were taken, and then he was off at a scamper, in turn to run full tilt against Mr. Horsley and Mr. Wainwright, and to get his ears soundly boxed by the latter for his unmitigated rudeness to them. They had joined company again, and were deep in calculations and consideration of Enoch Taylor's new machinery and its prospective advantages, and were not of such cool temperament as to let the lad's rude jostling and rougher language pass scot free. They left him holding one hand to his tingling ear, the other curled round his mouth to carry farther the vicious threats he hurled after them.

Little attention did they bestow on the boy's *threats*. His *conduct* had not passed without a remark.

'That's a promising youngster. "Better clothed than taught,"' observed Mr. Wainwright. 'He seems to know you, Horsley.'

'Yes, and he knows my whip,' responded the other, slashing the air suggestively with the said whip as he spoke. 'I like to see a lad of spirit and mettle, but he is outrageous. I was almost thrown from my mare last week through one of his pranks; but when I had quieted the beast, I rode back and gave Master Mellor such a horsewhipping as he is likely to

remember. It is hardly safe to ride a mettlesome animal like mine over Longroyd Bridge when that young ruffian is about. I advised his stepfather, John Wood, to send him away to a good school for education and discipline both, or he would have a warm handful with him. But either Wood's afraid to part with his cash, or his mother to part with her wilful scapegrace, so he is still running wild. Neither you nor I were milksops, Wainwright, and it is not so long since we were schoolboys, the most resolute leaders at the barring-out, that we should be hard on a little bit of mischief in a lad; but there is always a spice of malice or cruelty in George Mellor's fun, and I cannot wink at that.'

Inside the inn this chance encounter and rebuke had been unseen.

'If you will meet me at three o'clock by the Cloth Hall, when the piece-market is over and clearing begun, you shall have the cloth to carry home,' said the stepfather, after settling the cost; and away went the Hartlands.

As they left the 'Packhorse,' they beheld young hopeful across the road, in the midst of a ragged crowd, by the churchyard, urging on the bleeding dogs to renew the fight and worry one another.

Walter interposed, and remonstrated with young Mellor; but his interference did no good to either lads or dogs, and only provoked a torrent of abusive language he was sorry for Marian to hear. The pallor on her cheeks at the sight she witnessed gave him pain. Leaving the incorrigibles to their brute enjoyment, back they went to the Market-place, where the town pump, which drew its supplies from a large reservoir underlying the Market-place, stood erect as an obelisk on a pediment of stone steps, with a round ball mounted atop. Close beside, the stocks were set for the behoof of those who had a marked antipathy to the pump, and indulged in something stronger than water. And, as stately as if it had no connection with either, the 'George Inn' overlooked the whole market from the north, yet aloof as if no part of it.

At the south-eastern side of the Market-place stood three or four very ancient wooden houses in a row, which seemed to lean against each other for support. A railed gallery or balcony ran along their frontage above the lower shops. Walter led the way behind pump and butchers' shambles to

an obtrusively outlying flight of steps which gave access to this wooden gallery. There, in a close and fusty room, they found a wool-comber, who dealt in small quantities of wool for private spinning. He was sitting in front of a wooden post, in which was set a steel comb, and was throwing or drawing a thick lock of wool over its heated teeth. By his side was an iron 'pot' filled with glowing charcoal, and in this another steel comb was heating to be ready when the other was cold, the heat serving to soften the grease which helps to mats a fleece together.

The process was not new to Marian, and as the wool-comber rose on their entrance to shake hands with Wat, leaving his comb to cool, there was no time lost in choosing the wool she wanted. And there a bargain was struck that if she could spin an even yarn, he would either take all she could spin at a given price, or find her a customer, as he had done for Wat's mother.

Walter next sought out a farmer whose unhorsed cart stood with its white tilt up in a row with others, and transferred to him a pair of fustian breeches in exchange for sundry coins. After that followed a visit to the grocer's for tea, sugar, pepper, and candles (such candles!). Then they wound their way among the throng of people and horses across to the shambles or butchers' stalls for a piece of fresh meat; and, lastly, started off to keep their appointment with Mr. Wood.

Whilst they had been bargaining in the wool-comber's, a drunken man had been placed in the stocks; and there, again, when they left the grocer's, among a lot of rough and ragged urchins, was seen George Mellor, pelting the man with the garbage of the gutter, and never a constable was at hand to interfere and say them nay.

Impulsive Wat would have darted into their midst to disperse them, but Marian clung to his arm and besought him, for her sake, to keep back, lest they should turn round on him.

'No good comes o' stirring in other folk's fires,' said she. 'Yo had best leave Mestur Wood to deal wi' that lad. Yo'd get no thanks for meddlin'.' And so he held back, although reluctantly.

They found Mr. Wood at the entrance of the circular red brick Cloth Hall, almost under the clock and belfry. From him Walter received the thick cloth for his stepson's new suit, but nothing was said of the boy's recent amusements.

George Mellor, however, had a cousin Joseph, older than

himself,—a lad of another order,—who had witnessed the disgraceful scene in the Market-place. From him the town constable received a hint, and, hastening to the spot, the latter, in order to disperse the wanton young rascals around the prisoner in the stocks, used his long staff with so much good will that George Mellor and other of the crew ran off homewards with bleeding pates to be plaistered up.

At night he received a second drubbing from his stepfather, and set down both, in his own mind, to the credit of Hartland the tailor.

His cousin Joseph could have enlightened him, but Joseph was discreet and held his peace.

'I'll serve that Hartland out one o' these days,' muttered George; 'see if I don't!'

But that was as nothing to the threats he had thrown after the two friends who had dealt summary justice out to him that same day. Vindictive threats to fall from the lips of a boy.

The boy and his threats were alike forgotten, when, after a hasty snack at the 'Plough,' Wilfred Wainwright, the ambitious finisher, turning over in his mind projects for the extension of his business without undue risk, mounted his horse a little after five in the afternoon and turned its head homewards towards Greenfolds, which lay in a hollow in the Liversedge district, quite eleven miles north-east of Huddersfield, measuring by the roads then in existence. He set off at an easy pace along the north road, spurring his horse up the steep hill, and where a mile or more from the town it branched off left and right to Halifax and Bradford, pursued the latter until it was crossed at a lower level by Bradley Lane, running due east and west through the valley, with hills and woods on either hand.

Showing his ticket at the turnpike gate, he gave his horse a hint to hasten, but, falling again into a brown study, his horse dropped into an easy pace once more, though his nose was turned in the direction of his stable. Probably the beast had been cheated a few times, and had learned the fallacy of expectation, so did not care to hurry until assured which way his journey was to lie. On they went, heeding not the glories of the autumnal woods, or the black desolation marking out a coal-pit on their left, where a much-enduring quadruped went round and round in a monotonous circle to lower the tubs or bring coal and colliers to bank, without exciting even a sniff

or snort of sympathy from his well-fed brother on the highway. It was not until the river Calder and Cooper's Bridge were left behind, and at the junction of three roads, where Robin Hood's last arrow had been shot, uprose the tall grey obelisk called the Dumb Steeple, they were doubly reminded of an inn close at hand, and the fact that there must their destination be determined.

There, however, the horse gave a sniff as if he smelled the water-trough, and the rider shook himself together as if to rouse his slumbering senses from a troubled dream.

'Ay,' said he, 'I *will*, be the consequences what they may;' and his features set with a swift resolve which seemed to add a new grace and dignity to the man.

He suffered his beast to seek the water-trough at the 'Three Nuns,' called for a glass of home-brewed ale, and drank it where he sat. Then, when both were refreshed, he patted the neck of his steed, said, 'Not your stables this time, Lightfoot,' and, no doubt to the disgust of the once more disappointed animal, crossed the Nun's Brook, and at a gallop, as if to keep his purpose sure, took the road, not to Greenfolds, but towards Mirfield, where Kate Thornicroft, his promised wife, was making a long stay with her adopted aunt, Mrs. Ingham of Blake Hall; a detour which might mean little more than a couple of extra miles in distance, but of wearisome waiting for the four-footed animal more than he might care to contemplate.

Blake Hall, a large square stone-built mansion, with three rows of long narrow windows, two frontages, and dripstones above the doorways, stood within its own park-like grounds, and was approached from three points of the compass by fine avenues of walnut-trees, each avenue about three parts of a mile in length.

The loud cawing of a colony of rooks, some quarrelling over the ripening walnuts they had filched from the trees, attracted his awakened attention, and he slackened speed, wondering how best to obtain the undisturbed interview with his darling Kate which had that hour such momentous significance for him. That he visited Blake Hall as a wooer was well known, and in some sort sanctioned by Miss Thornicroft's friends, but there were other and richer suitors in the field, and opportunities to see his Kate alone were not so frequent as he could have wished.

A few paces more brought him close to the western wall of the park, alongside which ran a green country lane over which the great trees of the park cast a pleasant shade. There the high road made a sharp bend, to sweep round by the park wall on the south, past its pair of lodge gates. In two minutes Mr. Wainwright would have reached the nearest lodge, a little beyond this obtuse angle, when he chanced to turn his head towards the lane he was passing.

'By Jove!' he exclaimed, 'I am more fortunate than I deserve. That must be—yes, it is Kate herself. I must meet her before she comes within sight of the lodge.' In an instant he had turned Lightfoot's head and sent him forward with a bound.

Dress may be imitated or changed, but individuality is the same in any garb. There was no fear of a lover's eye mistaking the tall slim figure advancing with so firm yet light a step, even if her white cambric dress, her azure scarf and broad-brimmed straw hat had their duplicates by the score. The clear, unhesitating dark grey eyes, the firm yet sweetly smiling lips, the wealth of dark brown hair that fell in wavy ripples over her shoulders to her waist, the unaffected ease with which she swung a common wicker basket in her hand, betokened Kate Thornicroft and no one else.

She stopped short and clasped her hands together with evident pleasure as he approached, a warm flush rising to her temples.

'My dearest Kate!' he began, as he flung himself from his saddle; 'this is an auspicious meeting. I have been longing to find you alone.'

'Ah, Wilfred! I am so glad!' she cried simultaneously. 'I had a presentiment I should meet you.'

'Had you, my love?' said he, taking both her hands in his and pressing them to his lips. 'That is strange, for I had no intention of coming hither when I left home this morning. It was a sudden resolve. I had not made up my mind until I had reached the Dumb Steeple.'

'Dear me, did your mind require so much making up?' she asked, with smiling playfulness.

'*Yes*,' he answered emphatically, compressing his lips on the word. He drew her arm within his own, whilst the bridle of Lightfoot hung loosely on the other, and walked on,—not in

the direction of the lodge,—'Yes,' he repeated, 'and I had to summon up all my resolution, for I come, my dearest, to put your love—and my own—to the severest of tests.'

He spoke in a voice which told of strong emotion, held down by a stronger will. She looked up in alarm, clinging closer to him.

'Why, Wilfred dear, what can you mean?'

His voice sank lower, though there was no one within sight or hearing. 'I came, Kate, as in honour bound, to release you from your promise; to—to—give you up, if—if—on mature consideration—you should—wish it.'

'But I don't wish it,' she answered promptly. Then in another moment, like a flash, she withdrew her arm and said in her haughtiest tones, 'Perhaps, sir, *you* desire it. If so, I have no inclination to hold you against your will.'

'Nay, by heavens, Kate! it is no desire of mine. You should know me better than to suppose it.'

'I *thought* I knew you better,' replied she stiffly, 'but there is no knowing a man whose speech is so contradictory. You came here post-haste to give me up, "as in honour bound," whatever that may mean, and almost in the same breath tell me it is no desire of yours. Pray, sir, whose desire may it be? Are you bound by some earlier promise elsewhere—some gallantry from which honour forbids release?'

His lip curled. 'Not so, Kate. No woman claims me, if that's what you suspect. I never knew what love was until I met you at Squire Stanhope's eighteen months ago. You have filled my heart with never a rival since; and, strange as it may seem, it is the very depth and strength of my love that has urged me hither to-day to place my fate in your hands.'

He spoke in sad and sober earnestness. And she, her momentary pique dislodged, looked in his anxious face with bewildered affection. She clung to his disengaged arm.

'Why, Wilfred, what can have happened? What has made you so strange, so different from yourself?'

He drew his other hand wearily across his brow.

'My sweet love, I have been living for many months in a blissful dream-paradise of your creation. To-day a few words casually spoken by my old schoolfellow, Horsley of Marsden, broke upon my dream with a vengeance. He said "it was not fair to a woman to dangle after her for years."'

The words seemed torn from him with a torturing wrench.

'Well?' was all the comment of his companion. 'Well?'

'Kate,' he said hoarsely, 'the words might have been a thunderbolt. For the first time I saw how utterly selfish I had been in my love—how dishonourable it had been to seek and engage the dear hand I might not be in a position to claim for years! I brooded over it as I rode home, until, half-desperate, I resolved as a point of honour to release you.'

'Oh, that is it, is it? If I were so silly as to take advantage of your honourable unselfishness! But why should we have to wait longer than you anticipated?'

'Times are changing, my love. So long as all the finishers cropped and dressed their cloth by the old methods, I could compete with others, and stood fairly well to win a competence to justify me in taking home a wife. But the new machine Enoch and James Taylor have invented threatens to revolutionise the trade. Horsley, Bradley, and Armitage are all going in for them, and unless I follow suit, I shall be left behind in the race.'

'Well?'

'Well, Kate: before I introduce machinery I must either enlarge my old premises, or build an entirely new mill. Either will involve time and capital. Horsley is already laying the foundations of his mill, and is most sanguine as to results. I met Enoch Taylor with him this morning, and heard their calculations and prognostications, which seemed something incredible. Believe me, I shall not be a laggard when I have seen what work the machines turn out, but I have not Horsley's resources, and must do nothing rash. I propose to begin experimentally with a single shearing-machine as soon as the Taylors can supply it, and I have a suitable shed ready to receive it. All will not be fair sailing, for I shall have to encounter the prejudiced opposition of ignorant workpeople. And, my dearest, years *must* go by before I can reconstruct my mill and remodel my business so as to compete with larger capitalists. It will tax all my energies to do this. And, seeing it as I do, I see also I dare not invite you to share my lot with all its new uncertainties; still less can I ask you to wait.'

'And why not? All you seem to want is larger capital. When I am of age, or commit matrimony, my little fortune is

at my disposal, Wilfred—and at yours,' was Miss Thornicroft's interruption.

'My darling Kate, do you think your guardians would consent, if I were so base as to take advantage of your generosity? Nay, nay, my love, I could not risk your fortune as well as my own in a new experiment, any more than I could ask you to waste your best years waiting whilst I am fighting my way.'

'Indeed, sir? And do you think the captain fights any better for the desertion of his men? No, Wilfred Wainwright, if you will neither have me nor my little bit of money to help you in the fight with fortune, I must wait for you unwedded, if only to keep hope alive with a saucy word now and then. And now, sir, not another syllable. If I am never your wife, I shall remain Kate Thornicroft to the end of my days. A woman's love is not transferable like cash or notes—at least mine is not. Now, don't smother me! Remember where we are! And do let me go. Aunt Ingham will think me an unreasonable time in taking the wine and jelly to Mary Dean's sick lad Jonathan.'

Fortunately, neither Lightfoot nor the cawing rooks were gossips to be dreaded, or to count the kisses he left on her lips before he rode off rejoicing to Greenfolds (declining to see the, so called, aunt or cousin that evening), and left his true, bravehearted love to wait for him. How long?

Well, she was only eighteen, and, as she told him before they separated, she could afford to wait.

CHAPTER V.

GERMS OF FATE.

MEANWHILE Walter Hartland and his pretty wife trudged homewards along the Halifax road at a brisk pace, hoping to reach their destination before the shadows of evening closed around them. She was not sorry to get beyond the range of the irregular, malodorous little town, the clatter of clogs, and the clack of loud, dialectal tongues. It was all new to her, from the shining river on the south to the fine red brick Cloth Hall, the busy market-places and numerous inns, the hilly streets rising from the river as they trended north, and the tenter-fields dotting the landscape here and there with long lines of outstretched cloth fresh from the fulling mill or the dyer's vat. As they went on at a brisk pace there was much to talk over, although the gradual ascent of the road was not favourable to conversation.

Amongst other matters George Mellor's name came up.

'It is grievous to see a decently-dressed lad leading a set of ragamuffins into mischief,' observed Marian. 'He reminds me of whatn Joe Wrigley warr at his age. Joe had allays a tribe o' other lads at his heels, our Jack among th' rest. But though he led them into scrapes and dangers, he somehow contrived to get off scot free hissen.'

'Ay, Marian; but bad as George Mellor is, he's no sneak. He may be headstrong and reckless, but he's first in danger an' last out on it, cares no moore fur his own limbs than he cares fur others, an' if he eggs lads on to quarrel and feight

he'll tak' his own share o' th' hard knocks. He wur not a bad lad at one time, would fly up an' tak' any one's part, but his mother humoured him, an' his faither strapped him, till little o' th' good's left. Yet I'd wager a shillin' he knew yon drunken beast in the stocks wur a mortal bad un, idle and quarrelsome, an' George Mellor an' th' ruck had a mind to serve him out for banging his own wife and bairns. I confess I dunnot like th' lad, but let's give him his due.'

By this time they had gained the point where the toll-bar crossed the high road and they quitted it. A misty twilight was coming on apace, and the overhanging woods of Grimescar, through which the road was cut, had served to deepen the shade.

The bye-path they took had not even the semblance of a public road, but it led obliquely to a wider and much more frequented track, which was known as the Out Lane, and gave its name both to the toll-gate and to a cluster of dwellings a mile beyond, chiefly occupied by weavers. At the farthest of these Wat stopped to introduce his wife.

There was no occasion to knock. The door stood wide open, as if to let out a stifling cloud of badly-smelling steam.

There happened to be no one at home but an untidy-looking woman Wat addressed as Betty Longmore, and a five-year-old boy whom she called 'Siah.

She was hanging long hanks of newly-sized warps up to hooks in the rafters to dry, and was mounted on a chair. Without coming down from her perch, she explained, 'My maister's gone wi' John Walker to prentice his lad Ben to Maister Wood o' the cropping shop at Longroyd Bridge, an' hasna coom hoam yet.'

'He's a little lad to goa so far,' said Wat.

'Hegh! bud folk mun do as they con these hard times. And dunnot you know as Walkers have gone to live at Longroyd? We'n gettin' a wayver living next us nah.'

'Noa,' answered Hartland. 'I've heard nowt. I nobbut came back last week. But hanno yo a word fur my bonnie wife?'

'Ay, bud I canno get dahn fur annybody till I have hooked up th' last hank. Folk mun tak' me as they find me, rough or smooth.'

Marian thought there was more of the rough than the smooth. But Betty, having disposed of her wet and sticky warps, stepped to the floor, wiped her hands on her striped woolsey apron, and made up for the tardiness of her greeting by the heartiness with which she shook the stranger's hand, and hoped they might be better friends. Then she apologised after a sort.

'It's allus th' way if strange folk look in, one's sure to be all in a muck. But Tom's been that hard set for warp, I wur bahn to size warps mysen or lat th' loom stond idle. An' I'se ne'er had time to redd oop the haase, though I'se been agate slavin' sin dayleight. Neaw, 'Siah, leave go o' Mrs. Hartland's cloak; shu dunnot want to be plagued wi' a bairn.'

The child, attracted by Marian's winsome smiles, had sidled up to her and caught at a fold of her cloak with fingers that certainly might have been cleaner, looking wistfully up in her face the while. He seemed to shrink from his mother's rebuke and the hand she put forth to drag him away.

'Nay, I love childer; do not scold him,' said Marian, patting the rough brown head. 'We shan be friends some day;' and as they were going, she stooped down to kiss the upturned face, regardless of the stains upon it.

Josiah—or 'Siah—looked after her in wonderment. He got more cuffs than kisses, poor lad.

'Happen when yo come again I'se not be so thrang,[1] an' I'se noan so rough as yo may thinken,' were Betty's parting words, as they left the damp, unsavoury cottage for the fresh air without.

'Are those our nearest neighbours?' asked Marian, when fairly out of hearing, in a tone which implied more than she said.

'Ay, and not bad neighbours either. Betty's roughness is all outside, as yo may happen find soom day. An' th' sizing o' warps inside th' haase is not like to sweeten th' temper. Betty has a hard life on it.'

They had pursued an almost indistinguishable path upwards for about half a mile, when the gurgling and plashing of the nameless beck told them they were at home, before an abrupt turn round a knoll revealed the twinkling light set in the cottage window and Pincher's bark saluted their ears.

[1] Thrang—crowded out with work; busy.

'It's pleasant to find oneself expected,' cried Marian in well-satisfied tones, when the open door revealed three wooden porringers and spoons set on the clean table, and the three-legged iron pot steaming on the fire proclaimed that the old man had a good mess of oatmeal porridge ready for them.

The fare was homely, but welcome to the weary and hungry couple. They had had a good stiff walk, and came back laden. Besides the wool, Wat had brought home cloth and corduroy to be made up, and Marian's basket had contained a tolerable weight of provisions, of which the rare luxuries of tea and sugar were but small items; not much of a load to start with, but quite sufficient to carry uphill for miles. But she was young and happy, and scarcely felt the weight until she set it down.

The spinning-wheel was oiled and set in motion the very next day, and henceforth might be heard at intervals between Marian's light household duties singing its blithe hymn of industry; and Pincher pricked up his cropped ears and beat his stiff white tail upon the hearth, as if the once familiar music awakened slumbering memories.

Of course shears and needles were busy as the wheel, and Wat whistled blithely in the fulness of content. He had trudged over the moor and the footbridge spanning the infant Colne to Marsden, a small but promising little place on the rocky confines of Lancashire. There he found Mr. Horsley and a builder, with plans and measuring-rod, laying down the lines of the new mill, whilst a gang of men with picks and spades were already digging the foundations.

Mr. Horsley was too much engaged to bestow on him more attention than a nod, until the builder had marked out the ground according to his plan, the extent of which took Wat by surprise.

When at length he was beckoned into the dingy old counting-house, and bidden to measure his customer for a strong drab suit that should stand rough usage among mortar and masonry, or in the mill, Wat ventured to ask—

'Is it true, sir, as yo're going to set up machines as shall work 'bout hands?'

Mr. Horsley smiled.

'No machine works altogether without hands to feed and keep it going. But Enoch Taylor and his brother James are

making machinery for my new mill that shall do more and better work than many men, and in less time.'

'Hegh, sir! but what will th' poor folk do then?'

'Do? Why, tend the machines, or help to make them. We shall be able to supply warp and weft to keep the weavers' looms going. You must be aware how often they stand empty and idle for want of both, and how the thirsty wool-combers keep spinners and weavers waiting.'

'Ay, sure,' assented Wat.

'But it is only the masters who know how they lose time, money, and opportunities for selling, through the dishonest waste and reckless carelessness of combers, spinners, and others to whom they entrust their wool for manipulation in their far-scattered homes.'

Mr. Horsley's brow contracted as he said this, and Hartland was struck with the tone of determination and resolute will with which he added, 'We mean to start business on a different plan. I've no mind to be dependent on any workmen's sobriety or punctuality to keep faith with my customers. I mean to have all done on our own premises, under my own eye, and at less cost of time and labour.'

'That sounds all reight, Maister Horsley, but folk dun say as machines tak' th' work out o' men's hands.'

There was a slight curl of the young manufacturer's lip as he replied—

'Ignorance, sheer ignorance, my good man! But *you* are in no danger, so machinery need not trouble you or your pretty wife either. You two looked so delightfully happy the other day, that, hang it! if my mill had been up and at work, I should have put an end to my bachelorhood before the month was out.'

And with that Wat was dismissed, not very clear in his own mind about the marvellous machinery of which he had heard so much and knew so little, but impressed with the extent of the mill that was to be.

Next market day he took George Mellor's suit home to his stepfather's shop by Longroyd Bridge, south of the town. There, in the raising-room, where workmen stood in pairs in front of long sloping boards, with 'cards' in both hands, teasing or brushing up the loose fibres of undressed cloth into a thick pile, he found George Mellor squatting on a low stool,

and as busy as any preemer lad in the town, evidently in attendance on Sowden, the foreman, and his mate. A little way off, serving another pair of men, sat Ben Walker, the new apprentice, on a couple of bricks. Beside each lad on the ground lay a small heap of matted fluff or flocks, and two or more of the 'cards' used by the raisers. These cards, some in shape like the Latin cross, were closely set on the underside with dried heads of the prickly fuller's teazle (for which no substitute has been found to this day), and George, holding one of these wooden crosses by the long limb which served as a handle, was closely occupied in clearing away from the teazles the fluffy wool with which they were clogged, pricking and scratching his young hands unpleasantly in the process.

It was a preemer's duty to have a relay of clean cards ready for the raisers, or risk hard words and harder usage for neglect, and sore fingers were not counted as a fair excuse. Time rendered the skin callous, and too often the heart also.

On the entrance of Wat, carrying a parcel and inquiring, 'Wheere's Maister Wood?' down went the half-cleared card and up jumped George Mellor.

'Hegh! Have you browt my clothes? Come with me,' he cried, as if glad of a pretext for escape.

'Coom back, thou young limb,' shouted the tall man Sowden, with a curse. 'Dost think we's to be kept waiting fur cards. Wat Hartland con find th' maister 'bout thee.'

Obedience was no part of Master Mellor's creed. He was bolting through a doorway.

'Domn thee! Coom back!' roared the man, as with one stride of his long legs and an outstretched dart of his long arm, he brought back the offending lad by the ear.

George answered the curse with another, and a kick on the man's shins. But he speedily discovered that clogs are heavier than shoes, and that the lank fellow, commonly pretty quiet, was his master in more ways than one.

He scowled and muttered as he resumed his occupation, but he uttered never a cry.

'The lad's brave enough, whate'er his faults,' thought Wat, as he went on towards the burling-room, where Mr. Wood stood rebuking one of the women who had not picked her end of cloth as free from specks and shreds of teazle as she was expected.

'I saw Maister George in th' raising-room,' he remarked, as he unfolded his parcel, expressing a desire to see how the clothes fitted.

'To be sure,' assented Mr. Wood to both observations; adding, 'I've 'prenticed George to Sowden, my foreman. He was running wild for want of occupation. There's nowt like hard work to tame a headstrong lad. And he takes to it with a will.'

Wat thought otherwise.

'I'd a notion you'd ha' given him a year or two moore schooiling, Maister Wood, to help him on i' th' world. He's but a little lad to be knocked an' kicked abaght amang th' croppers, an' score his tender hand wi' teazles.'

Mr. Wood ignored the hint about the schooling in his deliberate reply.

'His hands will soon harden, and if a lad has to learn a trade thoroughly, he must begin at the first step. I was a preemer lad before I was his age, and see what I am now. And he's older than Ben Walker by six months.'

'I thowt his mother'— began Wat again.

'Hegh! Mothers are all soft,' interrupted the stepfather. 'The fact is, the lad was incorrigible. I've done the best I could to keep him out o' mischief.'

Wat had no answer to this, although he had a strong conviction that Mellor's own father, being a bookish man, would have kept him at school two or three years longer, or at any rate not have put him out to a trade before he was fourteen.

'I'm reight-down sorry fur t' lad. What's he to do without larning when he grows oop? John Wood's not doing t' best fur him. Croppers are a rough bad lot. He may larn a trade, but that's all the gooid he'll larn amang them. His own faither 'd ne'er ha' done it. As fur Ben Walker, poor folk mun do what they con to feed theer bairns. He'll hardly be knocked about here moore nor at hoam, an' he'll larn no worse here nor theere. Besides, he's a colt o' another mettle. I'd rayther ha' t'other than him. He'd sneak through a hole in a wall Mellor 'd be bahn[1] to break his back in leaping.'

Such were the thoughts running through the brain of Wat, whilst George Mellor tried on his new blue cloth suit in the press-room, but he made no further observation outside his

[1] Bahn—bound.

own business. And being paid with fair words and good coin by the stepfather, and with sullen looks from the new apprentice, he took his leave with never a suspicion how his destiny, or that of his self-reliant customer Mr. Horsley, then riding across Longroyd Bridge at a hard gallop, would hang on the will of that fierce-eyed, black-browed George Mellor. Nor did he connect him, save as a fellow preemer lad, with the son of his old neighbour, Ben Walker.

Yet a modern clairvoyant might perchance have told that the connection was big with fate.

CHAPTER VI.

JOSIAH AND HIS FRIENDS.

BETWEEN press of work and wedded bliss, Walter's stay on his own hearth was longer than ordinary. But before September had burned itself out, he had replenished his pack, and, after a hearty shake of his father's hand, and a lingering, loving embrace of his bright young wife, he set off again on his travels with his heavy load on his broad shoulders, turning more than once to look back on his moorland home, now doubly dear to him.

Marian and his father watched him from the door as he bent his steps northwards towards Stainland [1] Chapel, meaning to take Elland and Copley on his route, and then she turned in to begin her week's work, dashing away a rising tear with a determined hand.

But not even the singing wheel could keep the young wife, fresh from home and her companions in Arnold, from feeling lonely with no one but her father-in-law there week in and week out. And as the south-west wind came tearing over Blackstone Edge and Dean Head, driving the rain before it, her heart beat, and she grew anxious as the days went by. It was with a wondrous feeling of delight and relief she saw her husband return at the end of October, and fling down his pack to embrace her, whilst the old man rejoiced that Wat had come back safely with a considerably lightened load, and a number of guineas stitched for security in the waistband of his splashed and muddy breeches.

[1] Properly Staneland or Stoneland.

There were many itinerant tailors who found work wherever they went; but Walter, being hawker and tailor combined, had double opportunities. He could tell the precise quantity required for a garment, and the most appropriate material, to say nothing of buying his cloth from the makers and selling at low rates.

Then, as a rule, he travelled over agricultural districts, and the farmers, profiting by the exorbitant prices of grain and food generally, were the most thriving members of the community; consequently, they dressed well and paid well.

So, between trading, tailoring, spinning, and thrifty housewifery, they preserved a decent sense of comfort under their lichen-stained flagstone roof, in spite of the hard times, and had 'always a bit or a sup for a poor neighbour' or a wayfarer less fortunate.

Their nearest neighbour was Thomas Longmore, the weaver, who, having a wife and three children, had a struggle to keep the wolf from the door. They lived more than the third of a mile away, but at that time it was near neighbourhood on the Yorkshire moors.

It was quite a tale of happiness and prosperity the young husband had to carry with him over the country, and into the Sherwood forester's sylvan abode, when he shouldered his pack the following summer, and quite a budget of news he brought back home with him in the autumn.

Robin had taken active Nelly Barker to wife, and to his father's hearth. John was looking forward to early release from apprenticeship, and an increase of earnings as a journeyman to Mr. Bolton. Even then, he said, his wages would be shamefully small, and lessened by the rent he should have to pay for his frame, and the cost of keeping it in order.

Yet although he, like the rest of the stocking frame knitters, grumbled at labour so heavily handicapped, and with so little prospect in the end, he had not hesitated to take the first step towards matrimony; and without a shilling laid by, or an attempt to save when he had the chance, was courting Joe Wrigley's sister Patty, a pillow-lace maker.

Walter, hearing this, and observing the two together, had taken the first opportunity to tackle the lad—he was little more—on the prospect he had of keeping a wife, unless he put by

a small sum out of his earnings every week, towards preparing a home for her. He had ascertained that Mr. Wrigley, the thriving father, was not likely to admit them as inmates under his own roof.

The answer of the seventeen-year-old aspirant for the estate of matrimony had been a careless—

'Save? I've nowt to save. Theere's no saving out o' the few shillings I arn. Let Patty save; shu arns more nor me.'

'Surely, John, thou'rt not thinking o' being beholden to th' lass for cheers an' tables, bed and bedding, pots and pans?'

The retort came quickly: 'An' why not, if shu's got the cash, or can get it out on her faither?'

There was a curl of withering contempt on the lips of the warm-hearted, right-minded Yorkshireman, as he looked his wife's brother in the face, and answered steadily—

'Thy faither may well call thee *Little* John! Theer's not one of all the poor sparrows thou'st killed for the farmers at threepence a dozen, as had ever so little a heart in his breast or so poor a spirit as thou. The sparrow does help to build a nest when he chooses a mate. Dost expect thy wife to keep thee, as well as make th' home?'

'Shu arns most,' persisted the other sulkily; 'an' 'twill be soon enough to think o' that in a year or two. We han only begun courtin' a while back. Old Wrigley set his face agen us, but Joe's fur us, an' neither me nor Patty's for wedding reight off.'

'Better not wed at all than wed on nowt but selfishness, an' th' woman's arnings,' said Walter sternly; then, as if the whole thing seemed incredible, adding, 'Thou mun be joking!'

'Happen I am! But it's nowt to thee;' and so saying, Little John turned on his heel in a huff.

'But he was noan joking, Marian, lass,' said Walter seriously, on reporting the conversation to his wife.

'Joking? not he,' was Marian's comment. 'Patty Wrigley will rue the day shu changes her name for Greenwood. John an' her brother are a pair, but Joe has th' longer head, an' if he's fur th' match, theere's summat to be gained i' th' long-run, I know. But they're both fonder o' lakin'[1] than work; an'

[1] Playing.

they care for nothing and nobody but theer own two selves. Happen Joe's the worst, though he has been to school. But if he larned to read and write, he larned naught else that was good, fur a' th' lickings he got. Well, Patty knows what John is, an' if shu takes up wi' him shu deserves all shu gets.'

After a long and meditative pause, during which she cleared away the remnants of their humble meal, and set them outside the door for Pincher, she leaned her arm and her head against her husband's shoulder, as he stood opening his pack on the tailoring board, and old Hartland was washing his hands in the back kitchen.

'I say, Walter, it's dull and dreary here sometimes when yo're away for long months at a stretch, but there are th' market days, an' church on Sundays, and little Josiah Longmore finds his way here betimes, an' I han yowr coming to look forward to, an' we talken about yow, an' then at last yow come, an' all's breight again. An' I wouldna goo back to Arnold fur a' th' world; though I do pine to see mother an' the rest now an' again. Theere's love and peace here, but theere'd be no peace if our John lived within reach. He warr never pleased an' never satisfied unless he set other folk by the ears. I'm thankful I've got a peaceable, God-fearing, hardworking mon to look up to, an' love, an' trust.'

'That's a good hearing, Marian,' said he, with a smile and a kiss. 'I wur never better pleased to have thee on my own hearth, to comfort th' owd faither i' my absence, than when I heard th' fratching an' grumbling between Robin and John and Robin's wife. Thou's a tender plant, an' needed love an' care, not quarrelling all day long.'

'What's that about quarrelling?' cried the old man, as he came, with horn-rimmed spectacles on his nose, to resume his place on the board. 'I hope theere'll never be no quarrelling under this roof. Me an' my wife lived here together for more nor forty year, an' never had a wrang word but once, and that wur when our youngest lad Tom got drunk in Halifax, an' listed for a sowdger, more nor five year ago! five year ago! Shu never reightly got o'er it. An' we ha' never heared a word on him since —never a word.'

Walter quietly helped his father to his place on the board, and began to reckon up his gains, and to show the little cloth

he had brought home; but Marian noticed the old man wipe his spectacles furtively, and fancied his thoughts were on the march with his soldier son, he seemed to lose his reckoning so frequently.

Old David Hartland had memories of other sons and daughters, but they all lay with his wife under a grassy mound in Stainland Chapel yard, within a stone's throw of the curious old cross, round the head of which St. Andrew's Cross was repeated in a circlet, as if to hint that the circle of life was a continuous round of crosses. And though he was but a knight of the needle, working for homely people, there was something pathetic in the pilgrimages he made Sunday by Sunday, staff in hand, over the bleak moorlands, wet or dry, alone or with his son, to the grave nearly two miles away, and to the shiny seat in the old chapel-of-ease, where he and his wife had together worshipped for more than forty years.

He had another and younger companion now, but he never forgot the old wife, or the son who had forsaken home for glory and a scarlet coat.

Marian's loneliness was not of long duration. As she had said, Sundays and market days brought her into contact with the outer world, though they had rarely a fresh face by their own fireside, and few were the people to be seen out on the moors beside turf-cutters carrying loads of flaights from Dean Moss, or men and boys with gamecocks under their arms, going farther out for a cock-fight on the Sabbath, or with sticks for a cudgelling bout, or, it might be, only with their own thews and sinews for a wrestling-match or a prize-fight, though these seldom came out so far.

But no sooner had little Josiah Longmore made her acquaintance, and been taken to the tailor's by his mother's hand, than he contrived to find his way thither at all sorts of unaccountable times and seasons. At home he was often hustled out of the way, now to this side, and then to that, by his energetic and overtried mother, whose temper was somewhat gusty.

Betty had been chosen as a fitting helpmate by the weaver, as much for her trade as for her activity, as she happened to be a warper; and he had calculated that her bartrees[1] and

[1] Bartrees—the pegged posts for warping prior to the introduction of machinery.

creel would help to furnish his loom. And so, whilst his shuttle was flying from hand to hand, and his loom made an incessant clickity-clackity, clickity-clackity, she might be seen in motion before the two upright posts fastened against the wall and stuck with pegs like two inverted hat-rails, her body swaying as her bare arms went to and fro, bearing the warp yarn with adroit fingers from post to post and from peg to peg in long wavy lines, supplied from the cops on her creel.[1]

But woollen warp yarn unsized is soft and tender, liable to break or pull apart, and if a child happened to run against her, or stumble over her creel, and upset the cops, there was mischief done, and patience was tried.

'Drat the bairn!' she would cry; 'he's allus under one's feet. Get out o' th' rooad, will yo!'

A jerky lift from the floor, a smart slap on a bare back or arm, and a push towards the door would follow, and the little offender would steal away whimpering, either to the fireside nook, or into the open air.

Or when the warps were ready for sizing, and the great size pot was steaming on the fire, or when the weather was too moist for outdoor drying, and the long warps monopolised the space across the hearth almost from roof to floor, luckless 'Siah, who was always in the way, was glad to escape out of the steam, to the orderly house higher up the moor, though the short half-mile was a long stretch for his little legs.

There was snow-white Pincher to play with, and there he was neither cuffed nor scolded. He could watch the wheel go round, and the spindle twist and twirl upon the floor, and was in no one's way.

If old Hartland chanced to drop his beeswax, or thread, or a piece of cloth upon the floor, there was Josiah ready to pick it up; and very soon he made a successful effort to thread his aged friend's needles. He was just as ready to pick up weeds or stones in the garth when there was any tillage being done, or to feed the chicks, asking questions about this or that, but with less of childhood's noisy demonstration than might have been expected.

There was always a place at the table or a scrap of oatcake

[1] The creel was a wooden frame, on which the coppins of warp were arranged in two rows of nineteen each, so set as to turn freely, and allow the warp yarn to be drawn away.

for the welcome and willing little lad, who came thither as to an ark of refuge, whenever a tingling ear or a raised voice told him that his mother was 'thrang,' and he 'in th' rooad,' all unconscious of the life and brightness he brought with him.

No one ever came to seek him if he was missed ; not that he was less loved than his brothers, but they were out at work, young as they were, and he was not old enough, as his parents thought, 'fur owt but mischief,' and it may be that, after Mrs. Hartland on the first occasion took the child home by the hand, they guessed whither he had strayed.

But when, in course of time, at the house known as 'Side-o'-Beck,' an ancient oaken cradle was emptied of the odds and ends for which it had been for many years the receptacle, and was brought down to a snug corner by the wideopen, projecting hearth, to be filled with a chubby baby boy, to whom was given his grandsire's name, David, Josiah spent more of his time at the Hartlands' than at home.

He was more than twelve months older than when Marian had seen him first. He was sturdier and stronger. No doubt his impromptu trips over the moor in all weathers, often barefooted and bareheaded, and sometimes so soaking wet he had to be stripped and dried, had made him hardier, as they certainly had made him happier.

Frequent admonitions to avoid disastrous contact with creel or bartrees, warps or loom, in his father's overcrowded 'haase,' had subdued a naturally frolicsome nature, and made perforce a steady little fellow of six-year-old Josiah; so steady that Marian did not hesitate to entrust him with her precious little treasure to nurse, and Wat, in a fit of generous enthusiasm at his fondling care of wee Davy, sent him home 'breeched' for the first time, to his own delight, and the admiration of father and mother, though truth compels the admission that there were dregs of envy in Betty's satisfaction.

But it was not until there was a little Lydia in the cradle at Side-o'-Beck, and she heard the praises of 'her 'Siah' sung out by both Marian and the old grandfather, and she saw him as ready to thread needles, or fetch and carry in the house, as to frolic in the garth with toddling Davy and Pincher, that she roused to a sense of her son's value, and grew jealous of ''Siah's unnatural fondness fur folk as wur no kin to him.'

She did not recognise that kindness was kinship, and she became suddenly indignant at his 'being set to nurse other folk's bairns.'

Yet she was by no means an ill-natured woman, and left her own home untended to help in the nursing of the neighbour she envied in secret for her orderly home, her prosperity, and all that had proved attractive to her 'Siah.'

From that time she set the lad to rub and scrub at home, and urged on easy-going Thomas that it was time 'Siah was sent out to help to earn his bread like his brothers.

'Ay, ay!' assented easy-going Thomas, but the clickity-clack of his loom, or a long whiff of his pipe, was all his comment, and things went on as they were. But she did not let it drop, and one day came Josiah to Side-o'-Beck all elate.

'I'm gooin' to wark sooin to larn to arn wages like Jack and Bill.'

'What art gooin' to be?' asked Walter Hartland, who happened to be at home.

Josiah shook his sun-bleached head. 'I dunnot knaw.'

'Would'st like to be a tailor?'

'Yea,' replied the lad, 'if I wur to work here.'

'Would'st like Josiah for a 'prentice, faither?' queried the younger man, then working button-holes in a kerseymere waistcoat to save his father's eyes.

'Ay, that I would,' replied the old man promptly; 'the bairn hes larned to stitch a bit already, an' he'd be rare and handy i' th' haase, an' could mind th' bairns when Marian goas to market.'

It was early in June, and the days were lengthening. Walter laid down his work when the golden-red sun was dropping behind Blackstone Edge in a flood of glory; and with the lad running beside him, took his way to the weaver's cottage, expecting to find him still at work.

Yorkshiremen are not much given to beat about the bush. Without any circumlocution he opened his business, and proposed to take Josiah as a 'prentice.

The weaver's shuttle flew from hand to hand and back again. Clickity-clackity, clickity-clackity, went the loom. Back went the shuttle. Clickity-clackity, clickity-clackity went the loom.

The weaver was debating. 'I'd thowt o' gettin' th' lad

into Fisher's cropping shop, or putting him to Brooks th' wool-comber, or Jonathan Milne th' fuller,' he said, after a pause.

'They're all hard trades, Longmore.'

'Ay, so they be, but theere's good money to be arned, an' theere's plenty o' wark. An' theere's like to be plenty while th' war lasts, an' theere's no signs o' its comin' to an end.' And away flew the man's shuttle as he spoke, though the constant clickity-clackity of the loom almost drowned their voices.

'Yo see this web?' referring to the thick indigo-blue cloth he was weaving. 'Well, this is fur th' sailors i' our navy, an' th' wayver next door has a web o' scarlet i' his loom for th' sowdgers. Hauve th' looms round Huddersfeldt an' Halifax are agooin' wi' one or t'other, or wi' blankets fur theer bedding. But I'se have a talk to th' wife about 'Siah.'

Walter Hartland was gone when Betty Longmore came home to be consulted.

The offer took her by surprise, and she felt more than one twinge of jealousy to find her own lad of more account at their neighbour's than he was at home. But it did not blunt her motherly feeling, or blind her to the interests of the boy.

'What wage will they give?' she asked, as she emptied a coarse linen bag of the blue weft she had fetched from a spinner's.

'They'll keep him i' bed an' boord an' clooas, an' give him sixpence a week third year, ninepence fourth, a shillin' fifth, an' so on, an' rare gooid wages they be.'

'Ay, they bin. Tailoring hes noan done so badly fur th' Hartlands, if they con tak' a 'prentice an' pay that. An' if 'Siah dunnot like th' tailoring when th' time's oop, thou might turn him ower to th' croppers then, or mak' a wayver on him.'

So, much to his delight, Josiah Longmore was made over to Walter Hartland for seven years, and a flock bed was laid for him on the floor of the old man's room. And though it was a very long time before he was of any service with his needle, he was found useful in many ways, not the least as a playfellow and caretaker for both David and Lydia.

The latter change of occupation was recreation—sent him out into the cultivated garth, or among the heather and whins on the moor, and preserved his young limbs from cross-legged cramping on the shop-board.

Of course everything in that household did not go as smooth and soft as butter. There were times when the children quarrelled, and Josiah was troublesome, and Marian or the old man got 'put aat;' but there was seldom more than broke the monotony of life, and, all things considered, Josiah's apprenticeship was a happy and sensible arrangement; to no one more so than to little Lydia, though she knew the least about it.

CHAPTER VII.

HAUNTED BY A PRESENTIMENT.

WHETHER he halts, or whether he flies, Time never stops in his course to look back or observe whom he has knocked down, or whom he has lifted up, who hails his flight with joy, or who follows it with weeping. He drags us all along with him, now and then giving one a sharp stroke with his scythe, another a light brush with his wing feathers; leaving us to chronicle the years, of which he makes no account, with eternity before and behind him.

We cannot race on quite so unheedfully. There are crises in the lives of men and of kingdoms which cannot be overlooked.

In 1799 the grain crops failed so disastrously throughout the British Isles, that even the plethoric farmers began to wince; and ere Time shook out the last sands of 1801, and reversed his hour-glass for another year, Famine, with ragged skirts and bony limbs, was looking out of cottage doors and windows, or hiding, shivering, in fireless garrets. And, as if in mockery of newspaper prophecy, war still ran red-handed over the earth, shedding English blood and English coin like water.

Wherever ammunition or implements of warfare were produced, there was work for a portion of the people. There were swords and cutlasses in the hands of the Sheffield grinders; the forges of Birmingham were alight and noisy with the moulding and hammering of sabres and bayonets, musket and pistol barrels; our ports and arsenals were alive, and the

Yorkshire cloth-workers were busy. Districts so employed felt the general distress less keenly; but the peaceful arts languished, food prices were enormous, and if well-paid men in full work found their labour overbalanced when an ordinary loaf of bread cost eighteenpence or two shillings, what must the ill-paid and unemployed have suffered in the 'barley year,' as 1801 was called from the universal need to mix barley and rye for bread!

And now there were rumours of peace again in the air.

So far our friends at Side-o'-Beck had not felt the shoe pinch painfully. The thrifty old tailor had a small nest-egg lodged in Ingham's Halifax Bank, and though he had ceased to shoulder a pack as of old, and trudge over the Lancashire border in quest of custom and employ, he still kept his place on the board at home, only calling on younger eyes for needle-threading and button-hole making, at which Marian had herself grown expert.

And though orders came in less regularly during Walter's frequent absences, owing to the stiffness of old Hartland's limbs, and his inability to seek them out, and it may be to the growing tendency to patronise newly-established tailors in the rising town, whose style was newer also, he chuckled to himself as he thought of his savings, and said contentedly—

'I shall ne'er be a burden to Wat, thank God! I'se addled an' saved what'll keep me a' my days, if I sit idle wi' my pipe i' th' chimbly neuk. But I'm not come to that yet, God be praised. An' I hope to see my sowdger-lad back afore I close my old eyes.'

Whether he did or did not remains to be seen.

There were four children on the hearth when a notch was made in the calendar for 1802, and never surely was there a father fonder or prouder of his bairns than Walter Hartland, never one more inclined to bring them up in 'the fear and admonition of the Lord,' according to his ability. And never was clucking hen more indefatigably watchful over her brood than Marian. She had little leisure for lavish fondling, but her hands were never idle, her foot seldom strayed beyond her home limits, her children were neat and clean, if their clothes were but homely; and when Josiah, promoted to the shop-board, became of use with his needle, she was training David and Lydia, and even four-year-old Mary, to be useful in

other ways, without depriving them of childhood's birthright—freedom to play and romp in the open air.

Not merely from father and mother, but from their old playmate Josiah, they learned mutual kindliness and forbearance, and a reverence for old age as represented in their whiteheaded grandfather.

Before David was six years old, the heads of the family had become anxious that their firstborn should have some education, they themselves felt its want so sorely.

'If I'd stuck here all my life,' said Walter one night, when the youngsters were asleep up-stairs, and he had folded up his work, and sat, pipe in mouth, watching his wife's busy needles glancing as she knitted a sock for Mary's Sunday wear, 'an' never gone farther than Huddersfeldt or Halifax, I'd never ha' known or felt my own ignorance. I used to feel myself a peg above other chaps, since I could read a bit an' they couldna; but wi' gooin' here an' theere among better sooart o' folk, I began to feel like a fooil when I could noather mak' out a bill or sign a receipt. An' when I wur coortin' thee, and couldna send thee a letter once in a while, it did cut me up, an' I said as no lad o' mine should be put i' such a strait.'

'Ay,' said Marian, with a sigh; 'I've many a time wished I could write home an' ask after the old folk, an' how Robin an' Jack warr getting on, since Jack got wed. They cannot tell a B from a bull's foot.'

'Well,' put in the old man, knocking the ashes out of his pipe and rising to go bedwards, 'Davy dun know his A B C. I'se taught him to spell a bit, an' 'Siah too. That lad's a fair hankering after reading sin' he heard yo read i' th' Bible theere o' King Josiah. But theere's no schooil nigher than Barkisland Free School, an' that's in Halifax parish. I tried to get thee in, Wat, but it wur no use. We belong to Huddersfeldt.'

'Ay; but, faither,' said his son, 'th' new maister hes begun to take a few extra lads that are paid fur, an' I'd sooner goa without my 'bacca or my supper, than let Davy grow up untaught.'

And so Walter strode across the moor next morning, and prevailed on the master of Barkisland School to take six-year-old David as a pupil for a few pence weekly.

Barkisland was more than half a mile away, and the road barely defined, but Josiah volunteered to take David in a

morning and fetch him home in the afternoon. But he made a private stipulation with the boy that whatsoever he was taught by the master should be retailed to him on the way home.

It was a bargain faithfully kept, and served a double purpose. Josiah picked up a few scattered grains of knowledge, and David strengthened his own memory, though Mavor's spelling-book was all their library. It was, however, Mavor in its integrity, not the excised and diluted epitome of the old spelling-book that now makes a mock of Dr. Mavor's authorship.

The year 1802 was just nineteen days old when Walter, always at home during the winter, patted the head of Davy as he sat in his short-tailed jacket and breeches of corduroy, conning his morning lesson by the fire; lifted up little Benjamin from the floor for a paternal kiss; bade Lydia and Mary be good girls whilst he was away; and shouldered a bag containing not only the week's tailoring, but the yarn his wife had spun, for it was Tuesday, and he was bound for Huddersfield market.

Marian, now a comely and matronly woman, the picture of neatness in her dark woolsey skirt and short bedgown (or full jacket) of indigo blue print, with a parsley leaf pattern in white upon it, tied round the waist with a long and wide blue and white check apron, her flaxen hair drawn up under a plain white linen cap, followed him to the gate, or the narrow aperture which served for one, and, after a word or two concerning the purchases he had to make for the family, bade him 'God-speed,' and strained her blue eyes after his retreating figure as the mist of the morning seemed to swallow him up.

Somehow she had a spirit of uneasiness upon her that morning, a sort of dim foreboding of some o'ershadowing evil. She began to wish she had gone with her husband, as she generally did. Then, when the time came for David to take his bag with his books and his noonin',[1] and set off for school alone, as was by this time his wont, she bade Josiah put on his cap and see him safe to the schoolhouse.

'Why, mistress, what be that for?' cried old Hartland. 'A lad eight year old can surely go to schooil by hissen. Davy's not a baby.'

[1] Noonin'—refreshment to be eaten at noon.

'The walk will do Josiah no harm,' was all the answer she gave, unwilling to infect her father-in-law with her fears, or even to admit them openly.

She was given to sing at her wheel, but she had spun up her stock of wool and waited for more. In her restlessness she seemed to have double energy, and to need active employment.

The week's wash had been done the day before. Bidding little Mary play with Benjamin, and Lydia clear away the porringers, she began to sprinkle and fold the clothes in readiness for the iron—in that case the tailor's goose. It was not a long process in her hands, even with the ironing that followed. Long before noon the kitchen was hung with clean garments, fresh and sweet, if coarse and plain, cast over lines to air.

Then Lydia was set to clean potatoes and turnips for dinner, and up-stairs the mother went to scrub her uneasiness away upon the boarded floor.

As the day advanced, so did her uneasiness increase. There was an ominous redness in the western sky, at the sunset hour, spreading far above the horizon, and she knew it betokened wind.

Josiah was set off again with all speed for David, and the old man asked her again 'what had given her the fidgets?'

It was a relief to see Josiah, a homely but well-grown youth of fourteen, turn in at the gate with whooping David at his heels, all aglow with delight at a word of praise from his schoolmaster.

Still, her husband was away, and she could not expect him back for an hour or two.

Lydia, young though she was, had taken a pitcher in hand, and was setting off for the milk as usual to a farm three parts of a mile away, and called Mary to go with her.

To her surprise, Lydia was bidden, 'Gie the pitcher to Josiah, he'll goo sharper nor you two.'

At this Mary was inclined to whimper, for a long scamper over the wild heath was a joy to the little one, to say nothing of the bits of spice cake the farmer's wife occasionally found for the blue-eyed, flaxen-headed lasses, when on baking days her 'batch' had turned out well.

Marian herself could hardly have given a reason for calling

her girls in. The impulse had its origin only in the vague fears of an unshaped evil impending, which, as the day advanced, and all went well, she was the more ashamed to own.

Marian had brought with her from Nottingham a fondness for a 'cup of tea,' and hoped a cup of her favourite beverage would refresh her, and drive away the bewildering depression.

No idea of substituting the watery beverage for the milk or oatmeal porridge on which her children fed and grew strong, ever occurred to her. Old David, too, clung to the diet of his youth, and only on a Sunday afternoon 'for company's sake,' did her husband partake with her.

When Josiah came back,—with neither broken pitcher nor other disaster,—her tea was ready, and tin cans, clean if unpolished, had been arranged by Lydia on the table by the side of grandfather's bowl. These were supplied with wholesome milk, to which was added a fair share of oaten bread, of which, excepting herself, one and all partook with a relish. She took little but her indispensable tea.

A couple of dip candles were then fixed in the tall iron candlesticks, for the evening was closing in fast. These were placed by Josiah on the window ledge, at once to light the tailors, both old and young, whose hour for rest had not yet come, and to serve as a beacon for the expected home-comer.

There was a general scrub of hands and faces in the back kitchen, Marian insisting 'water is cheap, and dirt is dear.' Then the mother herself undressed the little ones by the fire, whilst Lydia removed all traces of the evening meal; and, after hearing their simple prayers, laid little Benjamin on a new press-bed in the corner by the fireplace, and led the others in the dark to their separate rooms up-stairs, not even granting David his customary half-hour's grace for lesson-learning, so anxious was she to have the house clear against her husband's return.

She had the children's clothes removed, a saucepan on the fire with the remains of the day's dinner—a sort of hodge-podge, where a small piece of bacon had served to lubricate and flavour a mass of vegetables. She knew Walter would have a sharp appetite, she was more than usually particular to have a savoury supper for him; and be sure the largest portion of the bacon had been saved.

There was no sitting still when all was ready; the swish of

thread, the click of needles against thimbles, the tick of the clock, towards which her glance went stealthily every now and then, all seemed to worry her, and set her own heart beating.

Down came the clean clothes hung up to air; they were folded and put away in the great coffer.

At last she took refuge in her knitting, and her knitting-pins went click-click as they twinkled in her rapid fingers.

The Dutch clock gave warning with a bur-r-r-r, and then she counted up from one to eight, as if she had not known the hour.

'What can have happened? Wat never was so late before!' burst from her then, as Josiah leaped from the board and helped the old man down, glad the day's work was over.

'Ay, he is a bit latish, but theere's nowt wrang, lass! Happen he's takken a drop too much o' th' Huddersfeldt ale!' was old David's attempt at consolation.

Marian rose indignantly; her blue eyes kindled.

'Not him! Walter never takes too much.'

In another moment she was down the garden and at the gate, Pincher racing after her, and there she stood straining her sight along the moonlit path.

Josiah was at her elbow. 'Shall I run an' meet maister? Happen his load's too heavy!'

'Ay, do, theere's a good lad.' Her permission was enough. Without going in for his cap, he was off at full speed, infected by the evident alarm of his mistress, with Pincher bounding along far in advance.

CHAPTER VIII.

STORMS LET LOOSE.

THE wintry wind came cold and keen across the moor. Marian had not thought of bonnet or shawl. As she stood there watching, she shivered involuntarily, without consciousness of cold, so much was her mind preoccupied.

Josiah was speedily out of sight; and then every minute seemed ten.

She could scarcely credit afterwards how short a time she had stood there, when Josiah came running into sight again, with Wat striding alongside him, and Pincher barking for glee.

Her heart gave a great bound, and tears of thankfulness gathered under her eyelids.

He was heavily laden, but Josiah seemed to have relieved him of his burdens somewhat. The latter waved his hand and shouted, but the wind carried his words away.

Into the house she went, to have the good man's supper in readiness, her mind relieved in part, though the great load seemed unlifted.

'Oh, Walter, love! what han kept yow so late? I warr afead something had happened;' and she threw her arms around his neck and kissed his wind-blown cheek with more than common fervour.

'I'm glad thou's turned oop. Shu's been a' day lang as restless as a hen on a hot griddle,' interposed the old man from his seat by the fire.

'Well, old woman,' cried Walter cheerily, setting down a covered can of treacle, before releasing himself from the pair of heavy bags slung across his left shoulder, 'well, something has happened, but nowt very terrible, an' nowt as consarns us. Theere's been a row at John Wood's cropping shop, and —but let's ha' my supper, lass, an' I'll tell thee afterwards. I'm as hungry as a hunter. An' never do thee get feared o'er me. A mon as doesn't get drunk can mostly tak' care on hissen.'

'Ay, Wat, but things *do* happen betimes as han naught to do wi' bein' drunk or sober. An' all this day I've felt as if I couldna bide still for fear o' some misfortune as warr hanging o'er us. I dauredna send Lyddy fur a can o' water, fur fear shu should tumble in th' beck.'

While she spoke, Walter was justifying his ability to 'take care of himself,' attacking his savoury supper with an appetite whetted by a long fast, and unspoiled by luxurious cookery.

Marian meanwhile opened his bags, and set aside the wool and other matters in the housewifery department, including a pair of shoes for David, and 'th' parkin fur th' bairns.'

Josiah, obedient to a nod, said 'Good-neet,' and skipped up the stone steps to his bedroom, conscious that if he kept awake he should hear pretty much all that had to be told; the hearty voice of his master rising through the chinks of the raftered floors, as well as through the open doorway at the head of the steps.

Presently Walter began, with his mouth half full: 'I say, faither, dost remember that cropper lad, Jack Booth, as thou used to tell us th' old vicar set such store by, teachin' him larned languages, an' makin' a clargyman on him after all?'

'Ay, ay, Walter, surely. I did hear as he was made th' parson o' th' church at Lowmoor. What on him?'

'Why, when I went to Wright's fur th' betweens needles, he wur theere, an' I had to bide my turn. He had gone theere fur cropping shears; an' I heard that he wur gooing into partnership with a cropper at a place they called Toad Holes, sin' his church living would not keep him. He had a girlish-looking lad wi' him he called John, an' theere wur some talk

between him an' the ironmonger about binding th' lad to him to larn saddle an' harness-making, when he wur older and wur better educated. He said John would never be strong enough for a cropper, and he wanted him to have a good trade in his fingers if he had larning in his head.'

'But what han that to do wi' th' row at Wood's?' asked Marian, taking up her knitting.

'Not much,' replied her husband, wiping his mouth; 'but I heard th' little chap read, and I'm daggered if he didn't go at it right off, without spelling a word, an' him not bigger than our Lyddy. I wur glad then Davy had gone to schooil.'

'Well, but'—began Marian.

'Don't hurry one,' said he, emptying tobacco, needles, buttons, twist, etc., from a big pocket in his long waistcoat as he spoke. 'Yo knaw, I'd got to go to Fisher's cropping shop at Longroyd after that money as William Thorpe owes me. When I got theere, Thorpe an' two-three others were running across th' road wi' their greasy woollen brats on, right to John Wood's, wheere theere wur a terrible uproar. After them I went. Theere John Wood an' George Mellor were at it hammer an' tongs. I couldn't get to knaw reightly what first began it. It wur something wrang o'er some mistake as had been made, because George could not mak' out the written directions. There stood George, threatening to dash out his stepfaither's brains with his shears, his hard face in a flame, and two black veins standing up on his forehead like a big V. If Sowden an' Hey hadn't held him back, theere'd ha' been murder done. John Wood was all in a tremble, an' looked as white as a sheet, an' kept as far as he could out of harm's way. And there was George rating his stepfaither for keeping him in ignorance. "I was meant fur something better than a journeyman cropper," he shouted; "but you took me from schooil, an' set me to wark before I knew what wark meant, an' yo locked up my faither's books on purpose that I might forget what I had learned. If I rebelled, I wur thrashed; mother cried over me, an' I wur thrashed for that. I'd as much brains and energy as Enoch and James Taylor. Had you kept me at schooil a year or two, an' put me to wark at the anvil wi' them, yo'd ha' made a man o' me. Look at them; they've filled Bradley mills and Horsley's with machinery, an'

they're still at wark for Wainwright, an' I've been kept here to wark as a journeyman cropper."'

'Well, croppers arn good wages,' put in old David contemplatively; 'an' happen Maister Wood meant him fur a partner some day.'

'Not he, faither; John Wood's too sly an old fox for that. You should have heard how he sneered at him, and at his wife, when she came wringing her hands and imploring them not to fight; but he took care to keep th' long cropping-board well between them, an' made sure Sowden an' Hey had a good grip o' George. "Luik," said he, curling his thin lip,—"luik, madam, luik at the quiet partner you propose for me! So cool an' collected! so fit to govern others, he controls himself so well. Do you think me such a fooil as to gie that murderous, strong-willed scamp the chance to rule o'er me?" I thought George would have got loose then, fur his shirt collar gave way, his eyes seemed to flash fire; an' if his mother had not thrown herself on her knees before him, he'd have sattled John Wood.'

'How dreadful!' exclaimed Marian under her breath, as she listened intently.

'Dreadful, ay. But that seemed to turn George. "Don't fear for him, mother; I'll carry my strong will and myself where they may be wanted. Never again will I crop cloth in this shop, an' none shall finish the work I'se begun." An' so, shaking one arm free with a sharp jerk, with that he ran th' shears in th' cloth on th' board an' ripped it up reight along. Wood gave a shriek and jumped forrard, as if to save th' cloth; Sowden left go his hold, and George darted out o' the shop brandishing th' shears, an' defying any one to follow him.'

'Was that th' last on it?' was Marian's breathless question.

'Fur all I saw. John Wood stamped and swore, fur the end[1] of cloth wur spoiled, an' he'd have to make it good.

'That would goo again' the grain,' chuckled old David. 'John Wood holds a tight grip o' his guineas. Did Thorpe pay yo?'

'No, theere wur such a hubbub an' confusion after George

[1] An end of cloth is a whole piece, generally sixty yards long.

Mellor wur gone, one saying one thing an' one another, that I clear forgot what I went fur. Some were fur Wood, an' some fur Mellor, an' theere wur no getting at th' reights. It wur all I could do to finish my own business after that. An' I'd barely got clear o' Huddersfeldt on my way hoam, before George Mellor owertook me. He carried a big bundle on a stick o'er his shoulder, and his brow was bent an' black as a thunner-cloud.'

'Wheere was he bahn?' asked the old man.

'He said he should walk to Halifax to-neet, and take th' mail coach in th' morning, but he never telled me wheere he was bahn.'

'Coach fares cost money,' remarked Marian suggestively.

'Ay, they dun; but I reckon his mother's kept a purse open fur him. He complained bitterly of his stepfather's tyranny and ill-usage, but, to my mind, John Wood's well quit on him, an' Huddersfeldt too.'

'I hope he's gone fur good!' ejaculated Mrs. Hartland, rising to put her knitting away. 'I never hear his name without a shudder, as if he carried ill-luck about with him.'

'Don't be superstitious, Marian. He certainly carries a fierce, restless, discontented, domineering disposition about with him, that's like to bring ill-luck to hissen.'

'Ay, and to all he crosses!' interjected Marian.

She stooped as she spoke to rake the scattered embers together on the hearth and add a gathering peat to keep the fire alight; whilst Walter bade his father a hearty 'good-night' at the top of the stairs, after a fatherly look at his own sleeping bairns.

Their own bed was the one at the back of the old oak settle, in which Benjamin was then lying fast asleep, the warm flush of health upon his cheeks.

Walter was lying beside the boy before the orderly housewife had restored his chair to its place against the wall, slipped the great wooden bolt of the door into its socket, and put the old man's pipe and tobacco-pot on the high mantelshelf next the tinder-box.

As she stood to extinguish the candle, turning it upside down to drown the light with melted tallow, the gurgling of the beck could be heard distinctly in the stillness.

She paused, held her breath, clapped her hand involuntarily

on her side; the vague fears of the day came back and held her there, with only a faint glimmer from the red embers to intensify the gloom; for the sky was now overcast.

'What a queer sound the beck has to-neet. It sounds as if some poor body warr choking out theere. I cannot abear to hear it! Theere's a storm brewing somewheere. An' hark! isno that the wind risin'?'

Yes, the wind was rising; but that was nothing strange in January, she told herself. Yet she crept into bed stealthily, and, in spite of the day's fatigue, lay awake to listen.

The wind came with a long, low, continuous wail over the moor. She was well accustomed to the sound, and but for the constant sobbing of the beck would have closed her eyes to sleep contentedly.

Presently she heard a dash as of peas against the strongly mullioned casement.

'Ah! I thought the rain could not be far off when the beck warr filling. It comes in gusts, and maybe will be ower afore morning. An' th' wind's noan so high that Pincher need whine so bad.'

Ere long, wind and rain and sobbing brook must have acted as a lullaby. She slept; but even her sleep was troubled with nightmare dreams of disaster. All Sherwood Forest seemed on fire, and the crash of falling trees and shrieking people awoke her.

The cries were from her children in the room above.

'Mother, mother, the house is tumbling dahn! We can see the sky through the roof!'

The awakening crash had been the tearing and falling of flags from the roof. A very hurricane was blowing around the house with the boom and roll of artillery, beating against the casements, shaking the stout doors, and threatening the flag roof with destruction; and Pincher was howling most dolefully.

In an instant she and Walter were on their feet. His breeches were on and he up-stairs before she had recovered from her dazed stupor.

The children one and all came scrambling down half dressed, and wholly terrified. The din awakened Benjamin, who sat up in bed, and began to cry for company.

A ridge tile and a couple of flags had been wrenched from

the roof. Walter, afraid that more would follow, helped his father to huddle on his clothes and join the others below.

It was after five o'clock, and dark as pitch. A candle was lighted, the gathering peat broken up, and the fears of each increased as the white faces of others became visible.

All the old witches of Lancashire might have been riding on their broomsticks across the hilly border, the winds seemed to hold such a pandemoniac revel on the moor, howling, shrieking, whistling, rushing, and shaking the strong stone house in their stronger vehemence. It was scarcely possible to hear each other's voices in the hurly-burly.

Old Hartland took his usual place on the stone seat within the wide chimney, and asked for his pipe, saying he felt shivery being wakened out of his sleep.

There was a general scramble to dress around the fire, which was soon made up. The porridge pot was suspended over it, and, putting a brave face on her fears, Marian sifted and beat in the oatmeal. Little Lydia laid porringers and spoons upon the table, together with a bowl of treacle and the remains of yesterday's milk. David and Mary clung to their father, who was seated on the lang-settle with Benjamin on his knee, mentally praying that the wind would abate.

Josiah was here, there, and everywhere, apparently helping Lydia, certainly doing his best to dispel her fears.

'Th' wind seems to ha' lulled a bit,' remarked Marian, as she poured out the last bowl of porridge. 'I hopes th' worst o' th' storm's o'er. Coom, childer, to the table.'

'I'se ha' mine here, I feel soa chilled,' cried grandfather; and the bowl was accordingly placed on his knee as he sat in the nook.

Little Benjamin was set down with his porringer beside him on the floor in front of the fire, and Pincher crouched against him, all in a shake.

Grace was said, the breakfast half-eaten, when, like a host of demons greedy for their prey, wilder and fiercer than before, the winds came with a sudden rush howling down upon them, tore the straw beehives from their stand beneath the window, sent the poor little workers adrift in a swarm, shook the house to its foundation, and down with a rattle and a crash came stones and blinding soot from the chimney-top.

A shriek rang through the house.

The fire was smothered. What of that? Another fire had been put *out*—the fire of life. Old David Hartland had been struck on the temple with a falling stone!

Ay, and—sight as direful to the stricken mother—little Benjamin lay senseless on the hearth under a heap of stones and rubbish.

No one thought of Pincher. He was obliterated.

CHAPTER IX.

AN ILL WIND.

'OH, my bairn, my bairn! he is killed! he is killed!' shrieked Marian, flinging herself wildly on her knees beside her child, seeing and heeding nothing but the one object, as with trembling hands she endeavoured to raise him, calling frantically on Wat to assist in freeing him from the rubbish.

Beaten down as he sat on the ground, he lay face forward in a strange position, never moving or crying, until his mother would have lifted him from the floor, then nature asserted itself in a short sharp cry, and silence followed. The painful utterance conveyed at once reassurance and distraction. He was alive, but he was injured; to what extent she had no knowledge, and nothing could be learned from the soot-blackened countenance.

Walter, on seeing his father fall back stricken, with his head against the wall of the chimney nook, almost strode over the group upon the hearth in his haste to reach him.

Alarmed, he drew the venerated head, no longer white, to his own breast, and then observed with a shudder a crimson streak trickling down the side of the face.

'Brandy, Josiah, quick! Reach the brandy—he's fainted!' was his hasty call. Josiah was busied with Benjy on the hearth, lifting a crushing stone from the bent back. Davy sprang to obey his father, and, clambering to the corner cupboard, sought out the small bottle so seldom seen, but ready for an emergency.

Alas! there is no spirit with potency to restore extinguished life! In agony Walter ripped open his father's vest, and laid his hand over the still warm heart. There was no pulsation, and in this world the open eyes would see no more.

'My God! he is dead!' broke from the son in a burst of pent-up anguish, as the dread conviction forced itself upon him.

'Dead? Your father *dead?*' cried Marian in an uncontrollable paroxysm of grief. 'An' here's our pratty Benjy dead or dying too. Oh, I knew summat dreadful warr comin', but this is horrible;' and she groaned aloud.

Walter could do no more for the dead. In another moment he had laid back the lifeless form, and stood bending over his own son in all the bitter anguish of a double blow.

The children huddled together, dumb and white. The clock was on the stroke of eight, daylight was creeping in, the winds still seemed to sing a requiem round the house. Mary held fast by David, and shrank back in speechless awe and terror too great for tears, while Lydia and Josiah, little less terror-stricken, suppressed their own fears in their attempts to be of use.

The poor boy lay queerly in his mother's lap, his head against her bosom. The father lifted a little arm, it was limp, and fell when released. He would have taken the child in his own strong arms; the instant moan of pain deterred him.

'Don't,' cried the mother. 'I fear his poor little back is brokken. I daurna stir an inch. He cannaugh bear it. It breaks my heart to see him;' and down her cheeks streamed the tears she might not raise a hand to wipe away.

'My God! I hope not! That would be woe upon woe.' Equally moved he called in haste, 'A spooin, Lydia, a spooin.'

Like magic the spoon was handed to him, and a few drops of brandy were forced between the small white teeth set so rigidly.

'Suppose yo wur to wesh his feace?' suggested Josiah, offering a bowl of water; 'he's smothered i' muck an' dirt.'

The hint was taken. The cold water seemed to refresh and revive the child; his eyelids raised, but dropped again. More brandy was resorted to. There was an almost imperceptible

change in the ghastly face. But the slightest motion caused a painful spasm across it, and a low moan.

'Maister,' whispered Josiah in his ear, 'hadno I best run to Elland fur th' doctor?'

'Noa, lad, the wind would blow thee away. I mun goa mysen. Stay thee here an' do what thou con for Benny an' the rest.'

Walter rose to his feet, had on his topcoat and his soft hat, when he bethought himself. ''Siah, lad, dost think tha could help me to lift poor faither on to th' bed?' he asked in a low voice, strained in his effort at self-control.

The lad assented with a look and a sober nod, though half afraid.

The settle was moved aside. The fire being out on the hearth, there was plenty of room for Walter to step across and put his arms around the figure in the chimney corner, whilst Josiah lifted the motionless feet. It was a sad and heavy task for both, for Josiah was but young, and death in any shape was new to him.

A quilt was thrown over the silent form so lately a breathing man. The settle was restored to its place, and served as a screen.

With another hasty look at his unconscious boy, and an assurance of swift return, Walter hurried out at the back, afraid to open the front door to the fierce invaders that had already wrought so much woe, and were even then trying the strength of bolts and window frames. He had a stout walking-stick to assure his foothold, but he had a battle with the unseen adversaries impeding his errand of life and death before he gained the weaver's cottage lower down the hillside.

There a portion of the thatch had been blown away, the 'weshtub' overturned, and all was in confusion.

But he had only to mention his errand, and stout-hearted Betty Longmore was at the door, with her head in the hood of her grey cloak, bent on reaching Side-o'-Beck, 'wind or no wind,' as she said, with the added remark, 'What's a neighbour gooid fur, bud to help i' toime o' need? Nobody's hurt here, thank God!'

Wrapping her cloak round her with firm hands, she seemed to wrestle with the wind as one who had no mind to be beaten,

taking the path upward. As for Walter, he turned the corner of the cottages and struck at a right angle across the moor recklessly, regardless of obstacles, making his own path, leaping over walls, and heedless of aught but his errand, until, on nearing the cultivated lands and the town of tragic history, the signs of devastation became everywhere apparent; fences down, trees uprooted, straw and twigs whirling in the air.

A horseman riding rapidly over Elland Bridge entered the Market-place at the same moment, and made an inquiry at the 'Saville Inn' door, then after a word or two rode off in the direction pointed out to him.

Walter Hartland, passing at the time, saw the well-fed host uplift his fat hands and exclaim to his disappointed ostler under the archway, 'Why, Tom, didst ever hear the like! The Halifax mail has been blown clean over, an' all th' folk on th' top o' th' coach have been killed. Maister'—(he did not catch the name)—'wur one.'

Walter was on the doctor's step, his hand on the bright brass knocker, when it flashed across his mind that George Mellor would be one of those outside passengers; but the door opened before he had time for further reflection.

He found Dr. Hebblethwaite already busy plaistering up wounded scalps and other injuries inflicted by flying slates and falling boughs on early risers; but the good man listened to the excited father without pausing in his task; an expressive 'Dear, dear, dear! Poor lad! poor lad! We must hope for the best!' an order for his horse to be 'saddled *at once*,' alone telling how urgent he considered the case.

He was quite a doctor of the old school, still wore a wig and an old-fashioned three-cornered hat, which he did not scruple to tie on his head that morning with his bright Barcelona handkerchief. He rode a steady-going roan mare, trained to carry double on occasion, such occasions coming pretty often in that region, where other conveyance might be wanting.

The mare was at the door saddled and ready before he had dismissed his plaistered and bandaged patients.

Bidding Walter Hartland mount behind him, they were off at a pretty fair trot, considering the weight to be carried, but the impatience of the father outstripped the steed, and longed for spurs.

They had the wind to meet, though its force was then abating, and the old doctor kept to beaten tracks as surest; but this added a mile or more to Walter's cross-cut, and there was a brief stoppage to pay the toll at Out Lane gate.

. . . . . .

Report, whether travelling on foot or on horseback, if made hastily and heard imperfectly, is apt to be transposed at every stopping-place,

All the passengers by the Halifax mail were not *killed;* and the mounted passenger despatched to a widowed wife in Elland had not exactly said so.

Mail coaches had not then attained perfection any more than had the turnpike roads.

The Halifax mail left the 'Talbot Inn' that morning with no more than an ordinary load; indeed, two ladies forfeited their fares rather than face the fury of the storm. Still there was a goodly quantity of luggage piled atop, and as the guard blew his long horn, and the four horses, leaving the Woolshops behind, turned at a gallop round a corner into North Gate, the vehicle swayed to the right, as much with the swift motion round the sharp curve as with the impact of the wind.

'Theere's a stiff sou'-wester a-blowin',' remarked the jolly driver from behind the folds of a thick shawl to a gloomy passenger beside him on the box seat (no other than George Mellor), as the horses flew along and struck sparks out of the stony way.

'Let it blow! There are crueller things than a stiff breeze,' was the sullen answer of the other, setting his teeth upon the words.

'Ay, surely, sir; there are men with passions raging fiercer than the fiercest wind that blows.' And the coachman flicked one of the leaders with his long whip, much as if he had 'touched up' his morose companion 'on the raw.'

'What then? Fierce winds and fierce passions keep the world from stagnation. Let the wind rave! It suits my mood, and fans the fire within one!' was the harsh response.

'Well,' retorted the coachman pointedly, 'there be pleasanter companions than either on th' box seat. An' sure to my mind we're like to have enough of the one before we reach our journey's end; though, to be sure, 'tis an' ill wind that'—

They had driven at a rush over the noble many-arched and

lofty bridge that spanned the swollen waters of the Hebble brook, north of the town, and had left Halifax behind. The wide moorlands stretched out far and high before them, only relieved by solitary houses and woods tossing their bare branches, or dark pines waving like billowy seas. The horses were strong and fresh, the air still laden with moisture after the rain. They had gained the spot where a tall finger-post stretched out its wooden arms to show where the road diverged to Wakefield and to Bradford. Obedient to the reins, the leaders turned their heads to the left, and then—as if in answer to Mellor's daring challenge — the shrieking winds came in full blast against the broad body of the coach resistlessly.

For one moment the huge machine rocked and swayed, the driver's proverb was cut short; with a lurch and a crash the mail was over on its side, the finger-post was down, passengers and luggage went flying through the air!

All was tumult, shrieks, and groans, the horses,—or three of them, for one would never rise again,—snorting and prancing, pulled and struggled to release themselves, adding to the horror of the scene, for the driver had been pitched among them.

Whatever the spot may be now, there were few people at hand that morning.

A man ploughing in a field left his horses, and ran to render service, sending his lad off in haste to give the alarm.

A hatter named Baines was the first man he met, and as he went on shouting for 'help!' the help so readily accorded in such catastrophes was not wanting.

The guard, injured but not killed, was the first to pick himself up, and join the ploughman in efforts to subdue the restive beasts, and extricate his old comrade, who was dead enough before help came.

Of the outside passengers, some had been pitched into a fallow field, two had fallen head foremost on a heap of stones which had been a good fence overnight, and they had gone their last journey along with the coachman.

The hatter's first care was, not to release the inside passengers, shouting aloud for 'help!' who, released, might have been of use.

'Let the aristocrats wait,' he muttered, 'they have softer cushions than stones;' and proceeded to lift up one bleeding

head after another. He shook his own sadly as he laid them down again, and, striding over the broken fence, turned to the three helpless ones in the field.

Of these the first he saw was George Mellor, who had lain there stunned. His foot was twisted under him; he had either broken or strained the sinews of his ankle, and was vainly attempting to rise, cursing his misfortune, and those who had brought him to it, in no measured terms.

The hatter, a captious, discontented-looking little fellow (nine years older than when he crossed Enoch Taylor's path), eyed him curiously as he examined the injured limb, and gently enough tried to ease its position.

Mellor winced under his touch, and set his teeth to keep in an ill-restrained groan.

'No other damage done, I hope?' queried Baines.

'Not more than th' shaking an' bruises, I reckon. I may thank the old slouch hat I pulled tight over my brows for saving my head.'

'You may thank the rain for givin' you a soft bed to fall on,' corrected the other; 'had you fallen on those stones, your hat would ha' been no good. There are two dead folk over there whose hats an' handkerchiefs too have not saved them.'

'Wheere's th' coachman?' asked Mellor then. 'I sat on the box with him.'

'Then you may thank your stars you were not pitched where he was, among the horses.'

Mellor shuddered, but he never thanked God he had escaped with his life.

Other help had come on the scene; spirit-flasks were handed round, and he took a long pull at one, but though it kept off a tendency to faint, it did not enable him to rise and walk.

'Hang it!' he almost groaned out; 'I cannot lie here in the mud all day; the other folk may have friends in Halifax, but wheere am I to goa?'

The hatter, who seemed to recognise a congenial spirit in the young man, informed him that a doctor and conveyances had been sent for, and that if he had nowhere to go, he could recommend him to an inn where they would not overcharge a working man.

'I am president of a club held there,' said he, 'and can say a word for you.'

Of all the mischief done by that 'ill wind,' none was greater than that which spared the life of George Mellor, and sent him to be cared for at the 'Crispin' as the friend of the democratic hatter, the leader of a set of men known at the time as Tom Painites; men who scoffed at religion and all lawfully-constituted authority.

CHAPTER X.

IN ITS WAKE.

SPECULATION on the causes or affinities which attracted grey-headed John Baines to George Mellor more than to any other of the injured passengers would be profitless. The self-exiled young man was neither civil nor gracious, and he cursed fate with no sparing tongue. The growing hoof on his wrist had proclaimed his occupation, his impatient and splenetic ejaculations had as surely betrayed that he was smarting under a sense of recent wrong and injustice, that he possessed a fierce, unquenchable spirit; and what might have repelled others won for him the attention and good offices of the social democrat.

There is no doubt the influence of John Baines secured for him at the 'Crispin' a degree of care and attention whilst he lay helpless, not warranted by his own amiability or by the metallic lining of his pocket.

Whether the innkeeper's compassion would have outlasted Mellor's coin, or the mere countenance of the hatter served to keep it alive during the many weeks the crippled patient was restricted to his couch, is doubtful.

But the hatter, who visited him daily, and who supplied him with Paine's *Rights of Man*, and other literature of a like character, to solace his solitary hours by fanning his fiery nature into flame, and who, being at once eloquent and intelligent, impressed the subversive teaching on the receptive mind of the cropper by his own commentaries, bade his *protégé* have no care for his rapidly-ebbing purse.

'If you do object to communicate with your friends,—and I do not urge it,' he said,—'you have only to enrol yourself among the members of our Democratic Club, and the means to supply your immediate requirements will not be wanting.'

To the club its president explained that he had found the very man they were in need of.

'His own wrongs have made him intolerant of wrong The hypocrisy and oppression of his stepfather have made him a rebel against self-constituted authority. A working man, he may be sent forth as an apostle of freedom amongst his fellow working men, a fiery torch to light up an inextinguishable flame throughout the land. Say, shall we admit him as a member? Shall we instruct and charter him as our emissary?'

Whatever was the response of the Democratic Club, George Mellor made no appeal to mother, stepfather, or friend for means to pay either doctor or host; gave no sign or token of his existence to one who had known him in his native place. He disappeared from Halifax, too, almost as soon as he could get about with the aid of a crutch, leaving no one to mourn his loss but his own mother and the rough serving-maid who had tended him in his illness, an overworked parish apprentice, whose hard lot had roused his compassion, and whose marked sympathy and care for him in his loneliness had roused something akin to gratitude in his breast.

'Do not forget me, Susan,' he had said at parting, thrusting half a crown into her unwilling brown hand. 'The parish has been but a hard stepmother to you. But keep up a brave heart, my lass, and dunnot let your exacting mistress trample on you. There will be a day of reckoning when I return. Then let the tyrant and the oppressor beware. Dry your eyes, Susan. I shall be back some day. It will be to reight more wrongs than yours or mine. And I shall not forget my good nurse, howe'er long I may be away. So fare thee well, my lass, till then.'

And whether out of gratitude, or commiseration, or sympathy, he gave the wondering Susan a parting salute, which meant nothing to the man who felt the destiny of millions depended on himself and his secret mission, but *everything* to the simple drudge who had never to her knowledge been kissed by woman or man before.

Was she likely to forget George Mellor? I wot not.

. . . . . .

The havoc of that memorable storm which, in overturning the coach, had brought George Mellor to the 'Crispin,' had not been confined to the district around Halifax and Huddersfield. If thereabouts trees were uprooted, houses unroofed, chimney-stacks demolished, cloth torn from tenters to flap and flutter like ragged banners in the gale, it was equally destructive in Leeds and Sheffield. And over the hills, in Manchester, not content with forcing in a dial-plate of St. Ann's Church clock, and whirling about slates and brickbats, it levelled to the ground, at Pendleton, two miles away, a newly-erected cotton mill, fitted with improved machinery; and instead of commiserating the ruined owner, the starving populace insisted its demolition was a judgment on him for making wood and iron do the work of living men and women.

But to no one with whom our story is concerned had the hurricane brought the measure of misfortune heaped upon the happy and contented Hartlands.

Barely had old David been laid in the grave with his wife and their little ones—never with human hand to clasp his soldier son's—than Walter heard of a letter waiting for him in the Huddersfield post office. It came from Nottingham, or rather Arnold, had been written by Robin Greenwood's wife (the only scribe in the family), and told all too abruptly that Marian's father had been killed in the Forest by the sudden fall of a great tree torn down by the wind, a tree already marked for felling.

David, who was counted quite a scholar, though he was scarcely eight years old, helped his father to decipher the uneven and misspelled scrawl, and so there was no softening of the ill news.

It was blow upon blow, shock upon shock. On Marian, always sensitive and warmly affectioned, it fell crushingly. She had never been robust, and coming, as it did, closely on Dr. Hebblethwaite's declaration that if her boy Benjamin lived he would be a cripple for life, it was more than she could bear. She swooned away for the first time in her life.

David, seeing his mother sink back as his grandfather had done, rushed bareheaded down the hill to the weaver's, crying out that his mother was killed.

Betty Longmore left her warps to fate, and was again off on a neighbourly mission, but when she reached Side-o'-Beck, Walter had just succeeded in restoring his wife, who, pushing back from her forehead her disordered flaxen hair, seemed struggling for recollection.

When it came, a flood of tears followed.

'Theere, theere, poor lass, thou'll be better sooin! 'Twur too much fur thee; but tak' a sup o' this, 'twill do thee good,' urged Betty, offering a cup of cold water fresh from the beck.

'An' now lay thee down a bit on th' settle,' she went on compassionately, seeing that the pure draught had acted as a restorative. 'I'll redd up th' haase fur thee, and tend Benjy.'

But if Marian was not strong, she had the energy and self-control which gave fictitious strength.

'Thank you, thank you, Betty. I'm all right now. Don't let me keep you from your work. It warr very good of yo to come. I've had a shock, but I'm better now;' and though faint and dizzy, she rose to go about her household ways as usual, rousing herself to exertion lest any less gentle hand than her own should touch her afflicted boy.

And so for three or four weeks more she forced herself to keep her grief hidden, to tend her child night and day, carrying out Dr. Hebblethwaite's instructions to the best of her ability; whilst he, doing the best he could for the little one lying so still and white on the bed whence his dead grandfather had been carried to Stainland churchyard, lamented aloud that there was no hospital in Huddersfield to which his patient could be removed.

Maternal love is strong, but maternal love is apt to overtax the bodily strength at its command. No sooner was Benjamin pronounced out of danger than the mother collapsed, and for at least a month lay hovering between life and death.

It was a sad strait for Walter Hartland, and a great grief. A sick wife in one bed demanding attention, a crippled child in another, and his tailoring upon the board to be done.

Then it was Josiah proved his worth. There was no household task he was not ready to perform; nothing came amiss to him. He was as ready to soothe Benjy as to relieve Lydia, who, though well trained and willing, was not seven years old, and could neither lift nor carry a heavy pot or pan.

For more than a week Josiah's mother came morn and eve

to make the two invalids comfortable, with never a grumble about distance or time wasted, though she was 'snappish enough at hoam,' the weaver said. At the end of that time Dr. Hebblethwaite found a kindly old woman to take charge of his patients and their home.

When at length, to Walter Hartland's infinite relief, Marian was pronounced fit to be carried down-stairs, he lifted her as though she had been a child, and could well have shed tears, so light and shadowy had she become.

Her eyes naturally went to the bed in the corner, and brightened at first to see her Benjy sitting up in bed playing with some gaily-coloured bits of cloth and a few marbles sent by David's schoolfellows; but the light soon faded as she noted the wan, pinched face, sunk down, as it were, between his shoulders.

An old arm-chair had been placed for her in the warm corner by his bedside, and it went to Walter's heart to witness the expression on her countenance as she stroked the child's fair head, or held his wasted hand in hers, saying every now and then in a faint voice, 'Poor Benjy! My poor Benjy!'

It was some weeks after this the weaver's wife said to her husband, 'I'm afeard that wife o' Hartland's 'll never be her own sen again. Shu's lost all her stir an' life. An' shu han to call him or our 'Siah if shu wants th' big pot lifted on th' hook or off it. Shu hasna th' strength on a sparrow. But that Lyddy's a handy little lass, only just seven, and con wesh up an' brush th' hearth like a woman. I wish one o' our lads had bin a lass to help me.'

After a while she resumed in another tone, without turning round, swaying between her warping-pegs, with guiding arm outstretched the while.

'I say, Tom, what's to be done with our 'Siah when he's out on his time? Art gooin' to mak' a tailor or wayver on him?'

'Hegh! I've not reightly made oop my mind. Theere's no hurry; 'Siah's got moore nor a year to sarve yet. An' now th' war's o'er, let's wait an' see what th' new Treaty o' Peace is gooin' to do fur us o'. Theere may no be so much cloth wanted fur sailors and sowdgers, an' happen wayvin' may be slack. But gentlefolk always wants cloathes, an' I'd hauf a notion them grand new tailors by th' Cloth Hall might tak' Josiah prentice when his time's oop wi' Hartland.'

This was not what Betty expected. She had seen what a general helper Josiah was under another roof, and had a notion she might find him as useful at home if his father would only make a weaver of him.

'A pratty thing that 'ud be!' exclaimed she perversely. 'Let Hartland do all th' teachin' o' th' lad, an' as sooin as theer luck's turned, an' thou's a chance, thinkin' o' giein' strangers th' benefit of a' he's larned! If thou made a wayver on him, folk could say nowt.'

'I think folk would say moore if we made a jack o' a' trades o' th' lad. We'n a reight to do th' best we con fur our own. Better mak' a good tailor o' th' lad than hauve a tailor an' hauve a wayver; and them Sykes's work only for gentry an' bettermost folk. Bud, as I said afore, theere's time enough to think it ower.'

So saying, the weaver went on flinging his shuttle to and fro, and, with his feet on the treadles, setting his loom noisily in motion as a hint that he had said his say.

Presently his shuttle required refilling. In the pause he began—

'What did you mean about Hartland's luck bein' turned?'

'Hegh! dostna know that when Hartland's roof an' chimbly had to be mended, the bees as wur blown out o' theer skeps wur found reight under th' roof? Hartland swept them into skeps, but no, the bees wouldno sattle theere again. They deserted the skeps in a great swarm, an' Marian hersen said as they carried luck away wi' them.'

The weaver shook his head sagaciously. He was as superstitious as his wife or Marian. 'Ay, bees are wonderful knowin'. It looks bad fur the folk at Side-o'-Beck.' But he said no more then about Josiah.

Walter Hartland's own mind was conscientiously exercised about his young apprentice. Josiah was there to learn his trade, and it followed that some one should be there also to teach him. The death of the old man had put him in a quandary.

As a good husband and a sensible man, he took his wife into his counsels, and they turned the matter well over after the young ones were in bed.

Walter himself had not yet left his shop-board, but sat cross-legged stitching away by candlelight, as if he had a double

responsibility on his shoulders. He had been wont to whistle over his work in the very lightness of his heart, now he only stitched and pondered. The late disasters had taken some of the blitheness out of him.

'Marian,' said he, as his needle flew, 'bring thy knitting an' sit by th' board. I want to have a quiet talk wi' thee.'

She planted her stool beside him where she could keep her eye on sleeping Benjy, the settle having been pulled away, alike for the benefit of the boy's scope as for others to observe him.

'Thou knaws,' he began, 'hawkin' pays better than tailorin', an' it's time I wur off; but theere's Josiah to be taught, and theere's our hoam-trade to keep together, an' it won't do to lose that. I might happen want it badly some day. What dost think I'd best do? Stay at hoam, an' keep Josiah at wark, or take up my pack, an' gie 'Siah his indentures back? It's a hard knot to untie, fur th' lad's just beginnin' to be of use on th' board, an' I've money owing me i' lots o' places.'

Marian had too closely debated the matter within herself to be backward in answering.

'Look thee,' she said. 'These are not times to fling money away that's honestly thine, or thy customers here either, or th' best year o' Josiah's 'prenticeship. Caun't thou tak' short journeys, mappen a week or fortneet at a time, an' leave work out fur him thou could finish off when thou got hoam again? I could see it warr done reight.'

'I couldna' do Nottinghamsheer i' a fortneight,' he replied.

'No, but that's further on i' th' year, an' if thou went by coach part way thou might mannish it i' three weeks or a month. I mean just to gather in thy debts an' sell thy goods, not to make them up fur wear. An' I'd like to know how th' folk at hoam are gettin' on now.'

'Well, lass, I think thou's hit th' reight nail on th' head. I con sattle down here after I've got in th' brass. An' thou'll not be so very lonesome wi' 'Siah here; he's gettin' a big lad now.'

Her advice was taken, and off he went, coming back at short intervals, and remaining a week or so at home to set work in order. But, willing as Josiah might be, there is no question the work suffered in his absence.

It was, however, a proud time for the young apprentice.

He felt as if the protection of the family had devolved upon him, and, hearing his mistress lament the loss of Pincher, he presently brought a curly brown substitute to Side-o'-Beck, for which he had given a lad half his week's earnings.

The dog—Curly, they called him—had already been trained to beg and perform sundry antics most amusing to little Benjy, to whom lying and sitting still were intolerably wearisome, though the child rarely complained. Mary, full of rude health, was too boisterous as a playfellow, the dog seemed to have a more sympathetic perception of the invalid's condition and requirements.

As the summer advanced, Benjy was able to sit up in a little chair made of rushes, and this was set outside the door in the warm sunshine by Josiah; Lydia, seated on the doorstep, being deputed to amuse the child and watch lest he should by any chance overbalance his chair. Mary might play with him, but she was too young and frolicsome for any care-taking.

Indeed Lydia had both the younger ones to overlook. Almost from the time she could walk she had been trained to self-help. She had seen no one idling. Work came to her as a matter of course, and recent events had preternaturally developed the gravity, thoughtfulness, and tender affections of the miniature woman. So from the hour Josiah said to her, 'We must not let your mother fret so much over poor little Benjy,' she had made Benjy her one great pre-eminent charge, a pat on the head from her busy mother being abundant reward.

It has been said that Josiah had bargained with Davy for a sort of second-hand education. This served a double purpose, for Davy, with all a child's frolic and fun, would have been apt to slight his lessons or neglect them altogether; but, elevated in his own importance as a teacher of elder Josiah, he was rather proud than otherwise of the learning which gave him superiority, elementary as it was.

Then Josiah was not content unless he brought Lydia into the small circle, and imparted a modicum of information at third hand, whilst Mary and Benjy slept in the unconscious ignorance of babydom.

Untaught Marian listened, and thought the boys wonders of learning, as she, with little of her old zest or animation, stood at her wheel, or sewed or knitted in silence by Benjy's bedside.

And she was truly thankful for the presence of the big bright lad who kept Davy out of mischief and was so kind to the younger ones.

Her hands were full indeed. Benjy demanded constant attention. The old man's hoard in the Halifax bank had been heavily drawn upon for the funeral, for decent mourning for Sunday wear, for the doctor's bill, and the mason's for repairs, which included the setting up of a firegrate and a bakestone that should fill up the space of the open chimney, now held to be unsafe as a resting-place.

Therefore she felt the necessity for adding more by her own earnings to the common support, so that Davy might still be kept at school, and Lydia follow him in course of time.

Feeling this need, her lessened ability was a sore trial to her. Often and often, when she had to rest perforce, would she refer to her day of presentiments and say to herself, 'Ah, I knew summat would happen ; an' nowt's gone reight since.'

It was well Walter had cut up his journeys, and returned so frequently and regularly, for, weary though she might be, she lay awake at night when he was absent, fearing lest some evil had befallen him ; and she never saw him depart on a fresh journey without a sort of chill.

As if in justification of her newly-developed fears, something did happen before that memorable year had finished its course.

CHAPTER XI.

A LUCKLESS JOURNEY.

WALTER'S short journeys had not been unproductive. He had collected small sums due to him, and, finding Josiah steadily improving, talked of covering the same ground at intervals, when his last brief journey into Nottinghamshire put an end to all.

The heather and gorse were in bloom upon the moors, the beck sparkled and tinkled merrily in the morning sun, the waving corn on cultivated lands was falling before the sickle, with all the scarlet poppies and blue corncockles gaily springing up between, when, pack on shoulder and staff in hand, he went out at his own gate, his children running after him for more kisses and more 'good-byes,' and crippled Benjy, mounted on Josiah's shoulders, bringing him back more than once with his repeated, 'Tiss a me! Tiss a me!'

Marian meanwhile stood outside the garth watching them all, and shading her blue eyes, not so much from the sun, as to hide the moisture gathering in them. So much fear had of late shadowed these partings.

He reached Sherwood Forest in due time, selling here a yard or two of cloth, there three or four of kerseymere, in one place stopping to make a coat, in another a pair of breeches, although he had started with no such intention, everywhere hearing and echoing hopeful anticipations of prosperity consequent on peace.

But there were also murmurs in the air against the rapid

development of machinery, in all trades alike; the greater as he advanced into the lace and stocking districts north of Nottingham.

'I'm surry I caun't pee yow te-day, Mestur Hartland,' said one and another of his debtors, 'we han to pee so much for frame rent, poor frame knitters caun't arn a livin'; an' them new long-frames as knit more'n one pair o' stockings at a time threaten to drive us all to th' poorheawse. But happen afore then theyn drive men desperate, an' then let th' mesturs look out!'

Such, with little variation, was the general excuse for non-payment, and tender-hearted Hartland could not press heavily on men he knew to be honest.

'Pay th' money over to Robin Greenwood, th' keeper as lives nigh Arnold, as soon's yo con,' was all he could say, trusting Robin as general collector to send a pound-note or two in a letter when received.

His sales were few likewise. As he could no longer give credit, or did not wish to remain and make up the cloth he had to sell, people hesitated, and declined to buy.

All this made him more anxious to hasten home to his family and settled customers.

He had found Robin and his wife established in the keeper's cottage, the old mother spinning by the fire, and complaining that she could not get a fair price for her yarn, people everywhere telling her they could get it cheaper and better spun by machinery; and, of course, lamenting the sudden death of her good man, but apparently content with her lot otherwise. She had never been a grumbler, and accepted the change in her position as a matter of course.

'Robin an' Nell let me want fur nowt,' she said; 'but as for Jack'— A mournful shake of the head and a heavy sigh said more than the abrupt curb the mother's heart set on her tongue.

Wat could see for himself that the old dame was well cared for, and that even the little ones were taught to reverence her years and her experience. There was no quarrelling, no disorder, now John was away. Robin's wife was as neat and thrifty as his own Marian, and the evidences of comfort and well-being were not wanting. Bacon in the flitch, dried herbs and onions garnished the oaken beams and rafters, apple trees

in the garden and a pear tree covering a gable were loaded with fruit ripe for the gatherer, to say nothing of green vegetables and roots for the pot.

'I wish we could grow fruit in our garth,' said Wat to his brother-in-law. 'Oats, turnips, cole, an' a few common yarbs an' two-three flowers are all we con rear. Yo see us con put nowt on th' land but what is browt o'er th' moor i' skeps on women's backs, an' th' ground's not good fur mich, even wi' that. There wur no keeping fowls in th' barley year, so we had to sell ours. We had a fine stock o' bees as fed on th' heather, but th' skeps wur blown over i' th' great storm, an' so we lost bees an' th' honey too. Hegh! but we lost so mich more, it's no good sighing ower th' bees.' Yet he did sigh, and heavily, thinking of all his losses by that storm.

Stout Robin, too, shook his head as he took up the theme, starting at the fatality that had made his mother a widow. He ended by saying, 'Mappen it wur as well th' old mon went, afore Jack broke his heart outreight.'

And then, less reticent than his mother, he proceeded to give his brother anything but a good character.

Nevertheless, Wat had promised Marian to see Jack and Patty, and to give her sisterly good wishes to both on this, his final visit.

So, carrying his much too heavy pack with him in hopes to make a sale or two by the way, he set out for Bulwell, another village in the Forest, and nearer to Nottingham, away from the high road on the west.

Robin, a smart stalwart fellow in his green velveteen clothes and leather leggings, with his gun over his shoulder, bore his brother-in-law company half way, but he declined to proceed, saying, 'Jack's so lazy an' worthless I wean't go near him. Patty's a good wife, but he uses her sheameful, and mappen we mowt come to blows if I saw moore on it.'

'Dun yo think he's like to be better if a' his own folk torns theer backs on him?' asked Wat gravely.

'Caun't tell,' said Robin, turning on his heel. 'I've set *my* back agen him an' his doings.'

'Hegh! but that's the wrang way, Robin. We're none on us angels, an' a chap as finds his own flesh an' blood set agen him is like to goa from bad to warse, an' say he may as weel be hanged fur a sheep as a lamb.'

Robin had paused to listen. He caught at one word.

'Hanged, indeed! Ay, an' it may come to that, if he dunnot mend his ways! But I'm noan gooin' to be hanged fur him, so I mean to keep out o' danger.'

And away he went as if he wiped his hands of all ill-doing. He might be a keeper of the deer; it was plain he did not regard himself as his brother's keeper. And if, as he implied he could not trust his own temper in his brother's evil presence, it was doubtless prudent to hold aloof.

As Walter approached the village, his ears were assailed by a din which became more deafening as he neared the poor hut Little John called his home.

There, right in front of it, a crowd of noisy men and women had assembled, beating tin cans and frying-pans, and carrying in their midst a man's effigy secured upon a long pole; one, who seemed to be the spokesman, shouting something like the following doggerel, to which they all sung out in chorus, 'Ran, dan, dan, tan!' with discordant metallic accompaniment—

'Little John's beaten his good woman;
We doesn't know what reason he han,
What, nor fur why;
But it's supposed shu wunnot eat
Cold cabbage[1] when shu's wantin' meat,
Nor drink when shu's not dry.
To my ran, tan, tan, tan.
He paid[2] her head, he paid her side,
An' that's the reason th' stang we ride.
Ran, dan, dan, tan.'

Wat did not linger to hear the remainder; he made his way through the crowd and knocked at the door. It was some time before he could obtain admittance. It was only on showing his face at the window and calling out his own name through a broken pane during a lull, that the bolt was withdrawn, and the door opened sufficiently for him to squeeze through. Then it was shut again hurriedly amid a chorus of derisive shouts.

Seated by the fireless hearth (to be sure it was only the end of August) was Patty Greenwood, once a smart, fresh-looking

[1] Cold cabbage—abuse. [2] Paid—beat or kicked.

lass, in clothes certainly much the worse for wear, and rent as if in a recent scuffle.

She had a lace-cushion on her lap, and kept her head bent low over it, as if intent on setting her entangled threads and bobbins in order, but Wat saw more than one tear fall upon the cushion, and when she could not avoid looking up, her blackened eyes confirmed all the stang-riding had told beforehand.

John himself had opened the door with a curt, 'Whatn do yow want?' then stuck his pipe in his mouth and slunk doggedly into a corner not visible from the window.

Walter Hartland's salutation had been hearty and fresh as his own moorland breezes. He took no notice of discourtesy, but delivered Marian's messages, and told how disastrous the year had been to him and his.

This no doubt furnished a theme for John Greenwood, who began a long tale of misfortune, of poor wages and little work, owing to frame rents and machinery, supplementing it with imprecations, chiefly, however, directed against the new machines for lace-making, which had lowered the value of Patty's cushion lace.

'Shu maks nowt by th' bobbins now, to speak on,' he cried.

'I make more than you,' she retorted, firing up, 'and I don't drink all I arn. Look outside there. That tells what folk think of you.' She had had something of an education, had Patty, and her tongue told it.

John Greenwood's effigy had been set alight, and the blazing bonfire lit up the dingy and disordered room, on which Walter looked with regret, not unmixed with thankfulness at the contrast his own home afforded. There was a stocking frame darkening the broad, low, diamond-paned window, like the wooden framework of a gaunt arm-chair, inside which, on a rail, the knitter should have sat with his feet upon treadles, lifting and shifting rows of shining needles (or hooks) in the complex back of the imaginary chair, and with every fresh motion of hand and foot adding to the stocking a fresh row of loops. But the frame stood empty and dusty. It held neither knitter nor work in progress, and spoke volumes for the indolent hand that had taken a woman to wife as the bread-winner for his worthless self.

If her tongue had sharpened with disappointment and ill-usage, it was clear John Greenwood had supplied the grind-stone.

There was no inducement for Walter to remain and listen to altercation. He was glad the deepening shadows of evening gave him a pretext for retreat. He was not merely 'in haste to get back to Arnold by neightfall,' but to escape from the discordant noise and tumult marking popular opinion of his lazy brother-in-law.

It was by no means his first introduction to 'stang-riding' as then practised, but it gave him an uncomfortable feeling from his own connection with the man held up to scorn. He had also his misgivings that the great hulking brute propping himself up against the wall would revenge upon his helpless wife the outcome of neighbourly indignation ere the night was out. The sudden lowering of his brows and the savage gleam of his teeth and eyes had told as much. And her sharp retort would no doubt make him pitiless.

It was evident he lived upon the woman's earnings, and repaid her with blows.

'Wheere,' he asked Robin on his return, 'is Joe Wrigley that he does not interfere?'

'Wheere he meant to be all along, at his faither's reight hand, a double-faced sneak! Patty may goo hang fur him! All he wantn's his faither's brass, and the longer shu's kept out o' the old man's seight, the moore brass he's like to get.'

'I thowt he wur friendly wi' John, an' favoured his wedding wi' Patty!' put in surprised Walter.

'Ay, to be sure. Talked her ower to wed Jack on th' sly. Promised to mak' a' reight with old Wrigley, and then, havin' got her out o' th' way, pretended as he knew nowt about it. An' if ever he said one word to bring her faither round to forgive them, he said three as should make him mad agen both, and shut his pockets and his heart agen th' poor motherless lass. John warr none so bad till then. Mappen a bit too fond o' cock-feightin', rattin', an' cudgellin'; an' noan too fond o' frame-work. But when owd Wrigley shut th' door i' Patty's face, an' wouldna gie her a penny-piece, after a' Joe had led him to count on, he took to drinkin', an' he's ne'er been good fur owt sin'.'

'Then, I reckon, he's quarrelled with Joe?'

'Neay! That's what bangs me! Joe still speaks him fair, an' treats him to a mug o' ale betimes, an' laments the obstinacy of his faither; an' one way or other, wi' promises what he wouldn do if he warr his own maister, he leads Jack by the nose, an' he hanna the wit to see it.'

'Why dunnot somebody undeceive him?' asked Wat indignantly.

'Why?' echoed Robin, with half a smile and a curl of his lip. 'Becoas Jack's th' best cudgel-player in a' the Forest, an' th' mon as daured to say a word agen Joe would get his crown cracked. He licked Patty for calling her brother "a wily fox."'

'Dun yo think, if I stayed ower to-morrow an' went to Bulwell again, Jack would listen to me, an' tak' brotherly counsel? I'm loth to carry bad news to Marian.'

'Yow'd throw away your breath an' yowr time. If th' stang-riding doesno shame him, nowt thou could say wouldn do it. Joe set him against yow when they warr but lads.'

'It'll be a bad hearing fur Marian,' sighed Wat, as they stopped at the keeper's wooden gate. 'It's well I can balance it with a tale o' peace an' comfort here, fur I've little else worth having to take back to her, poor lass.'

It was with a heavy heart he took leave of Arnold and the Greenwoods the following morning. The heaviness of his pack and the lightness of his pocket had something to do with it.

The sun was shining overhead, but he no longer imitated the notes of the birds among the oaks or the birches. If he whistled at all, his tones were low and doleful.

His blitheness had been stifled. He attempted to console himself with the prospect of reducing his stock as he proceeded; and for that purpose made many detours. But he found himself repeatedly regretting he had not remained and done something either towards the reformation of Little John, or the reconciliation of Patty with her father.

'I'd ne'er ha' missed th' day in th' lang-length,' he argued with himself long after he had left Forest and Mansfield behind. 'I mowt ha' done some good one way or t'other. I'm sorry I didno stay.'

If he could only have foreseen, he would even then

have halted, or turned back, and tried his powers of persuasion.

What might have been saved had he listened to the promptings of his kindly nature, and given the day to the good deed!

Walking into an inn kitchen in Sheffield at the close of the second day, hot, weary, and dusty, the hostess, who knew him well, made some observation on Wat's return with unsold goods instead of an empty bag. This brought on conversation, in which he remarked, cheerily enough considering the circumstances—

'I think of goin' ower Pitts Moor to-morrow an' round by Chapel Town; happen I may get rid o' some o' th' goods. I'se done so afore now, when I'd nowt like th' choice in my pack. Now I'se some nice scarlet waistcoatin' if Maister Snape wur wanting one.'

Mr. Snape was wanting, and so the pack was opened and the goods displayed. The good-natured landlord, who suffered little from hard times, willing to help an old traveller who used his house, not only purchased the bright red waistcoating, but brown kerseymere for coat and breeches.

It was the best sale Walter had made; and he said so, as he buttoned up his pocket on the money, and sat down to his supper of fried ham with all the better relish, unaware that two fellows, whose disordered military attire bespoke disbanded soldiers, sat at a table behind him, and exchanged glances full of meaning whilst the pack was opened and the purchase-money pocketed.

The men finished their ale and departed, attracting no more attention than the cutlers and grinders airing their grievances over the ale-can, so many were the disbanded soldiers straggling homewards since the establishment of peace.

If Walter thought of them at all, it was only a passing wonder whether his brother Tom was free and on his way home. He sat and chatted for a while with his host and hostess, talked of his good wife, and the children he had not seen for a month,—especially of poor crippled Benjy,—and then retired to his humble pallet, for security making a pillow of his pack.

In the morning he was up with the lark. After a frugal breakfast, and a cordial farewell of the innkeeper and his wife, he stepped out of the house into the narrow, irregular, up-and-down streets of the grimy town, where steam had been at work for eighteen years, and where, early as it was, the roar of furnaces, the clink of hammers, the rasping of files, the whir-r-r of wheels and hiss-s-s of grindstones saluted his ear at every turn.

The mail-coach road to Wakefield and the North lay over Pitts Moor in a direct line, Chapel Town being five miles ahead.

Besides the collieries and miners' huts, might be found a few better homesteads at far apart distances upon the black and rugged moorland, and these, being mostly set in the midst of oaks and other trees, served as a smiling contrast to the waste, where nothing seemed to flourish save ling and peat. A solitary oak gnarled and bent with age, or it might be a group of two or three, might now and then be noticed, as if left to mourn their kindred of the oaken forest, cut down by men for charcoal to smelt their iron, or to feed their greedy furnaces before they knew the use of coal ; but these relics of the bygone forest were few and sparse.

On all high roads near towns many people come and go, and if Walter had seen the two red-jacketed fellows who followed him at a distance, he would have made no account of it, so long as they kept to the king's highway.

But had he observed them track his footsteps cautiously as he turned from the frequented coach road into a mere pack-horse track leading to a distant hamlet, now seen, now hidden, as the path rose or fell, he would have turned to confront them.

Elated with his sale to Mr. Snape, he whistled as he went, hearing not even his own steps as they beat up the dark dust, and certainly not the faint rustle among the ling, as other feet hurried obliquely across the moor and behind a mass of rock, to the covert of a great oak trunk he would have to pass.

Treading warily to avoid a stumble over the outcropping roots of the ancient tree, he was suddenly felled to the earth by a dastardly blow from behind.

There were flashes of fire in his eyes, a clash of his teeth,

a pressure as of lead on his brain. He had a brief vision of two ruffians in scarlet jackets wrenching from his grasp the pack he held with a death-like grip ; a sort of half-numb consciousness of brutal kicks and blows pounding him all over, and then—happy oblivion.

CHAPTER XII.

GOOD SAMARITANS.

WALTER HARTLAND must have lain there nearly two hours, when the dogs of a sporting squire pointed at the prostrate man instead of grouse.

Squire Stanhope's gun was raised and levelled, his hand was at the trigger—a heavy groan arrested his ear and finger—his groom struck up the gun—'It's a mon, Squire, a mon!'

A man truly; beaten, bruised, and bleeding; with breeches pockets turned inside out, and never a coat to his back.

Brandy from the ever-ready pocket-flask brought back the slowly-ebbing breath. Strong arms raised and moved him compassionately, to recline against the broad tree trunk.

The Squire kept watch, whilst the groom ran hither and thither shouting vainly for 'help! help!' Then the man, in a state of wild excitement, clambered atop of a mass of rock two hundred yards or so nearer the high road, waving his cap, and hallooing lustily.

Fortunately a horseman we have met with before in the course of this narrative—Mr. Wainwright of Greenfolds, now the owner of a new and prospering finishing mill by the water-side near Liversedge—came within hearing. Riding leisurely, absorbed in thought, he caught the faint echoes of the groom's halloo, stopped his horse, listened, turned the animal's head in the direction of the sound, and, presently seeing the man waving his cap excitedly, spurred him to a gallop.

'You have good lungs, my man,' cried he as he approached.

'I must have been three parts of a mile away. What's the matter?'

'Highway robbery an' murder's the matter, or something like it,' he answered, descending to level ground. 'Me an' my maister ha' found a mon hauf dead under yon tree. We conno move him without help, sir, he's that heavy;' and he touched his cap respectfully ere he set off back at a run.

'Ah, Squire,' exclaimed Mr. Wainwright, nearing the spot, 'is that you? Good morning! And who is the poor fellow lying here?'

He was off his horse kneeling by the side of the unfortunate victim in an instant.

'Why, I do believe he is Hartland, the travelling tailor and packman!'

'Then you know the man?' queried Squire Stanhope.

'Ay; as honest a fellow as ever trod the ground. We must do something for him. There has been foul play here.'

'No doubt of that. If you will lend your horse to my groom, he will speedily bring assistance.'

'We may do better than that, Squire. Here, dip my handkerchief in yonder spring, and fill the cup of that flask with water at the same time,' he said, handing it to the groom, with the prompt decision of one accustomed to direct others; 'if we bathe his face and wash away the blood, he may revive. Hartland, my man,' he then said, with his lips close to the hawker's ear, 'you know Mr. Wainwright of Greenfolds, don't you?'

'Ay, sir,' came from the white lips, faint and low.

The gentlemen exchanged glances.

'He's conscious, at all events,' they murmured simultaneously.

Hartland's felt hat was cut through, and would not hold water; the groom filled his own sealskin cap as well as the top of the flask. Some of the pure cold fluid was poured down the poor man's throat, his face and neck were bathed, and the saturated handkerchief tied round his wounded head.

During the process Mr. Wainwright remarked—

'I have been to Sheffield ordering cropping shears for my machines. Rodgers would have had me stay and breakfast with him. It is fortunate I had strength of mind to decline. I should not only have lost my time, but lost the opportunity to serve a worthy man.'

'It was quite as fortunate the man had the strength to groan, or he would have had a charge of shot in him, and your opportunity would have gone for nothing. But see, he is coming round,' added the Squire.

'Do you think you could sit upon my horse?' asked Mr. Wainwright kindly, after a pause, as Walter's hand tightened in grateful acknowledgment upon his own.

'I could try, sir, but my head's fair maddled.[1] I'd be bahn[2] to fall,' he answered in a low, faint voice.

The brandy-flask was again put to his lips, and he seemed to rally. Presently he was raised to his feet. He swayed to and fro like a drunken man.

But amongst them he was lifted to the saddle, the agile groom leaping behind to hold him there. Mr. Wainwright then led old Whitefoot by the bridle, patting his neck to keep him quiet under the double burden. The Squire walked alongside, with his gun over his shoulder, his dogs at his heels, and thanking his stars he had not fired on the man.

Sheffield was the nearest place to find an apothecary to dress the man's wounds and some one to care for him in his helpless condition. Thither they bent their course slowly and carefully, speculating as they went on the packman's losses, and the little chance there was of bringing his assailants to justice.

And then the conversation became more personal. The capabilities of the new mill, the dogged resistance of work-people to the new machinery, the refusal of ordinary croppers and finishers to accept employment from the speaker or other masters who were bent on improvement, and his determination to resist coercion.

Thence it drifted into another channel,—the cloth-finisher's bachelor life in the old hall he occupied near Liversedge; the fears he had entertained lest his machinery should spell 'ruin' instead of 'profit;' and his prudent resolve not to bring a wife to his hearth until he saw his way to prosperity clear before him.

'And now,' said he, 'Squire, it is all settled—Kate has withstood ambition, persuasion, coercion, and waited for me like an angel. It was only decided finally last Sunday. We are to be married in six weeks. I hope to see you at our wedding.

[1] Maddled—confused. [2] Bahn—bound; certain to.

You know it was under your hospitable roof we had the happiness first to meet.'

'Ah, that was—let me see—ten years ago, at least. Yours has been a long courtship.'

'Not quite Jacob's courtship. Kate and I were both of one mind. We agreed it was better to wait than to wed precipitately. I have been told "I was a lukewarm lover to loiter in the porch, with the altar full in view;" at least, so my friend Horsley said; but our constancy has stood the test of time, and augurs well for the future.'

'I suppose Marston will marry you?'

'Yes, and Josh Ingham give her away. We are to be married from Blake Hall. But we do not wish to spread the news in advance, and you will please to respect my confidence, Squire.'

'Oh, ah! to be sure,' assented the other, with a chuckle. 'I suppose I am not therefore prohibited from riding over to Mirfield and wishing the young lady joy?'

Just then, with Sheffield in sight, the groom called out that he thought the man was growing faint, he leaned so heavily forward.

Recourse was again had to Squire Stanhope's flask. The spirit gave a temporary spurt to Hartland's failing vitality; and in answer to a question from Mr. Wainwright, he named the inn at which he had slept the previous night—a small hostelry near the bridge.

Little thought Wilfred Wainwright or Squire Stanhope that the animated conversation carried on incongruously close beside the wofully maltreated being might reach his ears, or that the increasing prostration was due to anything more than exhaustion consequent on loss of blood, the exertion of sitting upright, or the motion of the horse.

Faint he was, and dazed, but the very act of riding had roused his torpid faculties. He could hear, and in a vague way think, if helpless otherwise. And all he had heard of Mr. Wainwright's long courtship, and his fear of bringing trouble to the woman he loved by a precipitate marriage, smote him like a stone. He had lost stock, money, and, he feared, ability to work for his family. He sensitively accused himself of bringing trouble and poverty to his dear Marian and their children, by marrying in rash haste. His morbid reflec-

tions were confused and incoherent, but they pressed upon his brain and overpowered what little strength had been left in him.

It was with uplifted hands and voice Mrs. Snape greeted their appearance at the door of the small inn.

'Hegh, sirs!' cried she in dismay; 'can that be Wat Hartland? Why, he left here blithe and hearty at seven this morn! Dear, dear, dear! And only see him now!— Of course I will look after him well! What do you suppose I am made of?' she continued, while her husband assisted the groom to lead the poor fellow to a squab sofa covered with gingham, and a question was put to her.

There he was left in charge of the motherly hostess and a neighbouring apothecary, after his head had been plaistered up and his bruised body embrocated, and they had the assurance of the latter that his unfortunate patient's life was in no immediate danger.

Before they left, Mr. Wainwright slipped into one of the rifled pockets all his loose silver, with a quiet whisper to the sufferer that it 'would help him over the road home;' and Squire Stanhope, who had small faith in an innkeeper's unremunerated hospitality, stimulated the zeal alike of hostess and apothecary by a generous guarantee of expenses.

The Squire, sensitively conscious how nearly he had given the insensible mortal his quietus, was disposed to be more than ordinarily liberal. But he, being a shrewd old justice of the peace, made assurance doubly sure by remarking to the Snapes—

'I shall ride over to-morrow to take the poor wretch's deposition. He is too prostrate and incoherent to be questioned now. I shall expect to find him stronger and clearer-headed.'

So saying, he and Mr. Wainwright left the humble inn together, the latter accommodating the pace of his horse to the steps of his sporting friend. But no sooner were they well over the bridge that spanned the Don than the impatience of the business man manifested itself.

His horse did not take kindly to the dogs at his heels, and he had other matters on his mind than the shooting of grouse and conies.

The walking pace was irritating; so was Squire Stanhope's pressing invitation to dine with him at Cannon Hall, 'as the day was broken for both.'

'You are right, sir,' he responded, with promptitude. 'The

day is broken ; I must not lose the fragment left. I am sorry you have lost your day's sport, and that I must turn my back on a good dinner. But with all thanks for your hospitality, proffered so heartily, I must hasten homewards. The hours are speeding, and my business is calling for me. A man with half-hearted workpeople and antagonistic surroundings has small leisure for friendly intercourse in business hours. Good day, Squire ; I am glad you have promised to look in on yon poor man. Good day.'

A clasped hand, a raised hat, a touch of spurs on the horse's flanks, and Wilfred Wainwright was off at a gallop along the dusty road, striking up a dingy cloud that seemed to follow him. His way lay due north through Chapeltown, Barnsley, and Wakefield, where he would strike off westward through Dewsbury. Thirty up and down miles lay between Sheffield and his home at Greenfolds. He had started early, hoping to reach his mill before the afternoon was far spent. That hope had to be abandoned.

It was noon ; labourers on stiles, under walls and hedges, reapers and thatchers in the shadow of the corn stacks, pitmen in the doorways of wayside huts, taking whatever served as an apology for dinner, reminded him that he had taken but a hasty breakfast, that dinner at Black Barnsley was imperative alike for himself and his steed, and that the stoppage would disable him from reaching home in time for the business he wished to transact.

He was a man of decision, and, having arranged to do a certain thing at a given time, was not disposed to be baulked. He chafed at the interruption he had met, and the next moment took himself to task for his own inhumanity. But had there not been his horse to consider, it is a question whether his dogged obstinacy would not have caused him to ride straight on without more than a wayside glass of ale, albeit the dinner of an early-rising, hard-riding Yorkshireman was no light consideration.

As it was, he stopped at the 'White Bear,' ordered his dinner, saw that his horse was well groomed and fed, and sat down to his own repast with a feeling that he had lost something by staying.

He had lost more than he suspected. Had he not dismounted, or had he but taken a hasty mouthful of bread and

cheese, he might have come across the two ruffians with Hartland's pack, as they were offering its contents at low prices to a group of smutty pitmen a little way beyond Barnsley. The tailor's coat and waistcoat had already been disposed of. The 'red-coats,' of whom Wat had talked incoherently, were visible to beholders, and in conjunction with the tailor's goods would have condemned the men at once, had but Mr. Wainwright passed that way—at the time.

When he did ride up, an hour later, the group had dispersed, the two soldiers had struck across the country, exulting over their spoils, and the chance was lost.

What use was the warrant issued a day later, after Wat's deposition had been taken? Neither he nor the Snapes could swear to the men's faces, or couple the miscreants with the two disbanded soldiers in their kitchen when the pack was opened, and Justice Stanhope himself said there was little prospect of their apprehension, or the recovery of the stolen property.

In five days Walter resolutely set his face homewards, though his steps were slow, though every bone in his body ached, and his fatherly heart ached still worse.

It was hard indeed to be the bearer of disastrous tidings to the wife and little ones he loved so tenderly.

How he got over the twenty-nine miles of heavy road he never knew. Women in wayside cottages had taken pity on the forlorn and miserable traveller; a morsel of havercake, a cup of milk or a draught of water, and a seat by the door, or a night's rest on a settle, had been freely rendered by those who had none too much for themselves.

But it is these, the self-denying ones, whose gifts are registered in heaven.

They were the only helps Walter had by the way, except a lift in a clothier's cart once or twice.

He reached Side-o'-Beck bruised, faint, and weary, with his head bound up in a cloth under the stained and battered felt hat that had no doubt saved his life, wearing a coat that had once been Squire Stanhope's, and with neither cloth nor cash beyond four or five of the new one-pound notes stitched in the waistband of his breeches, and so overlooked.

The unwonted leaping and barking of Curly was the first signal of his approach. Josiah, seated in front of the window,

jumped from the board and was out in the garth with a cry that brought Marian and the children after him.

There was a general shriek, and then his wife was sobbing on his breast, only conscious that he had been spared to them from some evil that had threatened life itself. He came home a robbed and dispirited man, but if he had carried with him all the jewels of Golconda, he could not have been so kissed and wept over.

'Hegh, lass! thou art a comfort to a poor mon. I wur wicked enough to wish the squire as found me had fired his gun and put me out o' my misery. I'd nowt to bring hoam fur thee or th' bairns but sorrow, an' it made me mad.'

'Ah, mon, but what would ha' become on us, pining for seight on thee, an' never hearin' nowt from year to year? We han got thee back safe, so let th' rest goo. Love's worth more than money. We mun work harder, that's all.'

It was not all, but she did not know it then.

And it was well, or she could never have set herself so heartily to prove her own assertion that love was more than money. Something of her old spirit and energy came back to her, as she bustled about to make her enfeebled husband comfortable on his own hearth, shaking up the patchwork cushions in the old grandfather's arm-chair to make his seat easy, stirring up the dull embers of the fire to a glow to receive the kettle Josiah had filled, and to cook the rasher she cut from the ready flitch, whilst Lydia set the table for his extempore repast, and she herself bathed the weary traveller's face and feet, her words of thankfulness and gratitude to God for his safe return falling on his wounded heart like healing balm.

'Hegh, Marian!' he exclaimed, when he had feasted alike on his food and on her looks of love,—'Hegh, lass! but hoam's hoam, be it never so hoamly; an' when God sends a good wife like thee into th' hoam, a poor mon needn't envy the king in his pallis. Thou's reight. Love's worth more than money. But after all, it cooms rare an' hard to lose all that one's worked so long fur.'

'It wouldn ha' coom harder to lose thee!' promptly rejoined Marian, as she handed him the pipe she had filled.

The hearty kiss he gave her by way of thanks silenced both. He took up a bit of burning turf from the grate to light his

pipe, and puffed away; his eyes fixed on the glowing fire, his big brown hand clasped over the fragile white fingers of Benjy, seated in his low chair on the clean hearth beside him, whilst Marian exchanged a word or two with Josiah hard at work on the shop-board, set Lydia to clear the table, and took her place by the spinning-wheel, as if resolved to 'work harder' without delay.

Presently, as if she felt her remote occupation seemed unsocial, or she had an unacknowledged longing to creep nearer to the husband she had so nearly lost for ever, she left her wheel, took up her knitting from the corner of the settle, and sat down there herself, where she could look upon his wasted face, and listen to his words without idling for an instant.

Still Wat sat silent, with man's consoler in his mouth, intent upon the fire or his own reflections. All at once he drew the long clay pipe from his lips, shook out the ashes on the bar, and said, as if the result of long meditation, 'Theere's a worse want than the want o' money!'

'Hegh! an' what's that, maister?' questioned Josiah from the board.

'The heart of a mon to work fur his wife and bairns,' answered Wat conclusively, as a preliminary to an account of all he had seen and heard of John Greenwood's lazy and brutal habits, fostered as they were by Joe Wrigley.

A shout from the shop-board—'Here's Davy coming hoam from schooil!' and the clatter of clogs on the paved path, put an abrupt stop to his revelation for the time being.

. . . . . .

About the same hour, Wilfred Wainwright was closeted with Joshua Ingham at Mirfield, discussing the preliminaries for his approaching marriage, and insisting on the portion of the bride being settled upon herself, in contravention of Miss Thornicroft's own decision.

'If I can trust Wilfred with myself, why not trust him with my money?' asked she proudly.

'You may trust him, but you cannot trust the exigencies of trade, my dear,' replied her guardian. 'These are critical times, and you may live to thank his prudence as much as his generosity.'

'You have given me your warm, true love, my dearest Kate,

and love is worth more than money,' was Mr. Wainwright's lover-like reply.

'Suppose we calculate what love may be worth plus the money,' suggested the banker to her jocosely. 'There will be nothing to hinder you giving your annual income along with your love (and a golden robe may keep poor little Cupid from shivering in wintry weather); but you must leave business men to consult your interest in securing the principal.'

Miss Thornicroft was overruled, but not convinced. Her portion was not large, and her proud spirit revolted against the ungenerous meanness of tying up her money from the man she loved with her whole heart, he who had been fighting his way upward to prosperity, rather than take and risk it earlier; and the thought haunted her like a discordant note amongst even the harmonies of the wedding festivities, which followed in due course.

If she did not hear it in the trumpet tones of the Rev. Bertrand Marston, during the ceremony in Mirfield Church, or in the congratulations of assembled friends around, or in the louder greetings of the hearty folk outside, she could hear it above the clatter of knives and forks, the buzz of voices, the drawing of corks during the progress of the substantial dinner and the luxurious dessert; and it followed her through the mazes of the later dance, sounded in the farewell voices of Mrs. Ingham and the Squire, and in the crunch of the carriage wheels, as she and her husband were bowled along under the walnut-trees and out at the lodge-gates towards the new home where she was to reign supreme. (The era of wedding tours had not set in.)

Mrs. Wainwright was alone with her dear husband at last. The oppressive thought found utterance, as he drew her close to his side.

'I wish you had not insisted on those settlements,' she whispered, her head on his shoulder. 'I do feel so mean and shabby after all these years of waiting. I wanted to feel that all I had was yours. You could put the money to so much better use in your business, I know.'

'My darling Kate, I prize you and your love above all the money in the universe. But I am as independent as yourself. I have made my business what it is by my own unaided effort, and could not bear to be indebted for success even to my

wife. I have taken advantage of every improvement in machinery, in spite of croakers, and in the face of opposition; and when my mill needs your money to keep it going, it will be time for me to close it as a failure. But there is no fear of that now Europe is at peace. So my dear wife must be content to give me herself and her great love, and let me keep my own independence otherwise. No man shall say mine was a mercenary marriage. So kiss me, Kate, and let the odious subject drop for ever. Love is more than money!'

The sentiment was identical with that of the humble cottagers on the moor; but the significance how different! Consolation to the poor in the hour of affliction; satisfaction to the prosperous in the hour of supreme felicity. Love naked and unarmed to confront poverty on the threshold! Love, with gold-tipped wings, to beautify the home replete with comfort! Yet *Love*, conjugal Love, the same in all climes, all ages—Love glorious and immortal!

CHAPTER XIII.

JOHN BOOTH.

NINE years sped on their course, years fruitful in events and consequences.

The year of the wonderful Treaty of Peace, signed at Amiens, which was to last for ever, and lasted just one year and sixteen days, was a thing of the past, and war, fierce and bloody, was still in the ascendant.

And in all that time Walter Hartland had never once seen or heard from his soldier brother.

'I think Tom must be killed,' he said to his wife more than once. 'He would surely ha' got some one to write for him in a' these years.'

'An' theere's a' that money lying idle in th' bank; it would help us rarely if we had it.'

'Ay, my lass, so it would; but if faither left no written will, I have heerd him say ower and ower again, that me an' Tom wur to go shares in whatever he left behind; an' while theere's a chance o' poor Tom being alive, I couldn't touch his share if I wur starving.'

Marian would sigh and answer nothing. She was honest and just; but she verily believed that Tom Hartland had been killed, and that they had a perfect right to the money, of which there was so much need. She had all a mother's yearning care for her children, now numbering six, Silas, the youngest, scarcely out of arms, Robin but five years old, and Benjy, a pale-faced, diminutive hunchback, unfit to battle with the world. And she saw poverty advancing with very long strides.

Matters had been going from bad to worse with the Hartlands in those nine years, and not with the Hartlands alone, but with the country at large, the hand-workers suffering most keenly. The delusive prosperity consequent on a year of peace had been followed in reaction by still greater depression. Food riots broke out in one place or other, and were put down by force.

The humbler classes in the bulk were intensely ignorant. When children were sent out to work at six or eight years of age from dawn until night, how could they be taught? No longer blinded by the glamour of glory, the famishing families, whose bread-winners had been torn from them to supply the warlike holocaust, untaught to reason, but humanly able to feel, cursed the classes above them indiscriminately.

Men out of employment blamed, not so much the war, which had closed the markets for our commerce, as the masters who had introduced machinery to do the work of human hands; and men in work, when taxes and food prices went up and wages went down, again blamed the masters and their machinery for the reduction, and the consequent semi-starvation in their own homes, no less than for the misery around them on all sides.

Wherever two or three working men met together, there were sure to be mutterings and grumblings and threats, all the more significant from their covert allusions and passionate earnestness.

The volcano rumbles and rolls underground for months, nay, sometimes years, and the dwellers at its fruitful and fertile base, accustomed to the ominous cloud overhead, to the growling, and even gentle tremblings underfoot, sleep on and take no heed.

But some day the fiery monster leaps at a bound from its lair, and then what becomes of the heedless sleepers and their fertile lands?

Let Pompeii and Herculaneum tell the tale in silence, whilst antipodean Tarawara roars it over wreck and ruin.

My tale is of another order. It tells of the lava flood that seethes in the brain and maddens in the veins of men long-suffering themselves, or passionately indignant over the wrongs and injustice, real or imaginary, heaped upon themselves or others. And it must be remembered that few questions are

single-sided ; the masters had their feelings and their grievances co-existent with those of the unemployed or the workers underpaid.

When the year 1811 opened its sad eyes, Walter Hartland had no other assistant in his trade than his son David, and not sufficient work to keep both their needles going.

Nothing had ever been heard of the ruffians who attacked and plundered him on Pitts Moor. That robbery, which deprived him alike of stock and capital—his means at no time having been large—was the break-up of what might have been a prosperous career. He was offered goods on credit, but he shook his head and said—

'I'm greetly obleeged, but I cannot run the risk. I mowt be knocked down again, fur starving folk stick at nowt, an' then I couldno pay yo. No, thank yo. I mun stay at hoam an' do the best as a mon can wi' nowt but his own neeld an' thread. If I dunnot arn as much, I shall be on th' spot to look after th' wife an' bairns. An' shu'd rayther ha' me at hoam than th' extra brass.'

'Now, wouldn't thou?' he asked his wife when he got home and reported what had been said.

'Ay, Wat, ay! Th' heawse is no like th' same when thou'rt away. We're a' as dull as ditch-water when thou'rt gone ; childer an' all. An' theere's nivver a lark i' the sky, or a blackbird in a bush, as han music fur my ears like thy whistle o'er thy work. When thou warr travelling I couldn't sleep o' neets fur fear o' summat comin' to thee. An' thou sees as summat did.'

'Well, well, lass, so long as thou's satisfied, it's all reight.'

'Ay, an' it's best fur th' childer to ha' thee at hoam. Benjy seemed to pine fur thee. He warr always axing, "Wheere's daddy?" An' it warn't reight fur 'Siah to be left without a maister, though he's a downreight good lad, an' I've nowt to say agen him, an' he didn keep Davy out o' mischief wonderful.'

This was said prior to the July of 1803, when Josiah had another and more flourishing master found for him ; one whose presence and prosperity in the town were proofs of that town's prosperity and expansion notwithstanding hard times.

Josiah's seven years' apprenticeship expired that month.

Thomas Longmore, on the inspiriting of Betty, urged that 'A mon's bahn to do the best he con fur his own. Maister Sykes warks for th' gentry, an' 'Siah will both arn moore an' larn to do bettermore sort o' wark theere.'

There was no denying this, although Wat and Marian both felt something stronger than regret when the change was made. Josiah was in all ways a helpful hand. His departure left a woful gap in the household at Side-o'-Beck and on the shop-board.

The bright, clear-eyed lad of fifteen had been like a member of the family,—too much so for his mother's content,—and from the eldest to the least they were sorely distressed to lose him. Even baby Robin would miss the never-tiring tossings and garden 'gee-ups' of the strong-limbed youth.

But to no one more than poor crippled Benjamin was his going a loss and a trouble. The wistful look on the boy's pale face touched Josiah more than tears.

'Never mind, Benjy,' said he to the little fellow, once more able to walk about the floor. 'I'll come every Sunday an' carry you on my shoulders to church. An' I'll save all th' bits o' red an' blue cloth fur you, and bring you all father's waste thrums and healds.[1] I'd noan leave you if I could please mysen, but I'm bahn to goo where my faither sattles it.' So saying, ere he took up his bundle, he stooped to kiss the sorrowful-looking, sensitive lad, with tears in his own eyes.

'I *may* come, mayn't I, Maister Hartland, an' read wi' you in th' big Bible on Sundays? I shall forget all I've learned wi' David if I don't.'

'Ay, my lad, ay; come, and welcome. It'll be as good fur David as fur thee. He canno goo to schooil any more. He mun tak thy place now, an' larn to help me,' was the answer, as Walter held the boy's hand at the garth, the enclosure that would miss one of its steadiest cultivators when he was gone.

David and Lydia were both in waiting to 'see him down the hill.'

'You'll tak' care o' th' books an' bits o' things I've left

[1] Thrums—the waste ends of woollen warps cut off when one web is woven and another set in the loom. Healds—thick twisted threads so looped as to form eyelets through which the warps are passed as well as through the reeds.

behind,' said he to them ere they parted. 'Jack an' Bill would tear them up if I took them home. An' happen we may get an hour's reading now an' again.'

There was a ready assent, with the addendum from Lydia, 'An' I'll mend o' yor stockins fur yo.' A generous offer, seeing that tailors go about indoors on their stocking feet, for convenience in sitting on their board.

'Hegh, Lyd! you're a kind little lass. But I can do that for mysen, an' maun't trouble you. Yet if you could foot me a pair now and then, I'd take it kindly.'

'I'll ask mother to teach me,' she replied, and then the three parted almost at his own door, mutually content with the compact that was to keep friendship alive.

David had left school and been duly apprenticed to his father, as he was bound to be if he was to follow his trade in after-life. He was scarcely fit at first to take Josiah's place on the board, but he had been early initiated into the mysteries of thread, needle, and bottomless thimble, and in 1811 he was not only out of his time, and a well-grown youth in his seventeenth year, but a better tailor than his father; even his rudimentary education, comprehending as it did a little 'writing and ciphering,' coming in useful for measurements and memoranda, to say nothing of a few hints Josiah had given now and again.

Little enough that education was, not all Josiah's eagerness to press David forward and to acquire knowledge himself having served them, lacking as they did time, books, and tuition. Self-instruction under such disadvantages is uphill work.

Josiah had, however, found an associate in Huddersfield, a youth little more than the age of David, and of course years younger than himself, who had all the learning he lacked, and was not unwilling to impart it.

This was no other than John Booth, that son of the Rev. John Booth of Lowmoor, scholar, clergyman, and cloth-finisher, whose reading in the shop of Wright the ironmonger and saddler had so astonished Walter Hartland years before. He was a slim, pale, intelligent, but feminine lad, apprenticed to Mr. Wright, when Josiah, serving his second apprenticeship to Mr. Sykes, first made his acquaintance over the counter, when he went, as his former master had done, for betweens and ground-down needles.

There was a book open on the counter, and a book had a strong fascination for Josiah. He put forth his hand and opened it. He was puzzled; the characters on its pages were so many hieroglyphics to him.

'Hegh! what's this?' he ejaculated, with wonder in his tone and eyes.

'Oh, that's Greek.'

'An' what's Greek?'

'The language spoken by the people of ancient Greece,' answered Booth, as if pleased to air his superior information, his thin lips twitching nervously as he spoke.

Josiah shook his head; he was little or no wiser.

'Can you read it?' he questioned.

'Yes.'

'Can you speak it?'

'A little. No one speaks it now. It's one of the dead languages.'

Josiah's grey eyes expanded wide. He looked across the counter at the young student with blank amazement. 'A dead language? An' what's that?'

John Booth explained, adding, 'When I left home I promised my father not to forget what he had taught me. He must have set me to learn Latin almost as soon as I could run. I don't remember my first lessons.'

'*Latin?* Is that another dead language?'

John, bending over the needle drawer with his fingers in the ground-down compartment, searching for a packet the required size, only nodded in reply.

'Hegh! Your faither an' you mun know moore nor th' vicar, or th' schooilmaister oather,' exclaimed the astonished young seeker after knowledge.

'I daresay my father does know more than the vicar, if you mean the vicar of St. Peter's, though they do say Mr. Coates is a learned man. But my father is a clergyman too, at Low-moor. He's now writing a Greek Lexicon.' John said this with an elevated head and no small degree of pride; but whilst Josiah was puzzling what a Lexicon could be, the other added with sufficient modesty, '*I* don't know much.'

'You know much moore nor me. An' I know moore than my brothers, though they're older nor me. I can read a chapter in the Bible and the *Pilgrim's Progress*, but theere's a

rare lot I cannot understand nohow.' And he sighed heavily as he made the confession. 'You see, my faither's a wayver—Thomas Longmoore, o' th' Out Lane; theere was no schooil he could send us lads to without paying, an' he was too poor for that. Jack was prenticed to a wool-comber, an' Bill to a cropper, an' I was put to Wat Hartland th' tailor. It was theere I larned to read. But I knaw very little. You see I'se had no one gradely to teach me. Nobbody but little Davy what he was larning at schooil; an' hardly a book oather.' There was another heavy sigh as he took up the papers of needles, casting a look of lingering regret on the mysterious volume of dead language.

The sigh and look appealed to the surest sympathies of the precocious scholar. His thin sensitive lips twitched. The boy had generous impulses—nay, he was somewhat too impulsive.

'Perhaps I could help you,' said he.

Josiah's face grew radiant. 'Hegh! would you? I'd give owt to larn! But I must be off now, or they'll bang me. I'll come again.'

In another moment he was off, too much elated to care for the rough rating he got from the foreman for loitering.

A tailor is especially careful of a needle that suits his work, but the best of needles break, and shears require grinding. Josiah had many errands to the ironmonger's, and he did not permit Booth to forget his offer.

He had always some question to ask. 'Can you tell me what such a thing means?' or 'Wheer's such a place?' or 'How do yo spell such a word?' or 'When did such an event happen?' And if his young referee could not tell him on the instant, he generally had an answer ready when next they met.

The singular acquaintance ripened, although Josiah Longmore was at work from six in the morning until eight at night, as were his unlettered brothers, with no Saturday half-holiday on the week's horizon, and he had three good miles of rough road to traverse morning and night.

John Booth lived with his employer, and had consequently occasional hours of leisure after closing time, although no indoor apprentices were exempt from household service. He at once pitied the ignorance of Josiah, so much greater than

he anticipated, and warmed at the eagerness with which he caught at every scrap of imparted knowledge.

He was proud of the ability to instruct a lad so many years his senior, and was, moreover, an enthusiast in whatever he undertook. He was neither strong in body nor strong in mind, was capable of great things, but easily influenced; and well had it been for him had he come under no worse influence than that of the fashionable tailor's apprentice.

On his part, Josiah regarded his young companion as a miracle of learned lore, and was most grateful for the condescension which stooped to associate with himself, the humble weaver's son. Booth was, in dress, connection, manners, and education, so greatly his superior.

A friendship where one is regarded as a sort of demigod, and that one accepts the homage of his worshipper, to repay it with benefits, is likely to last—at least until the paint and gilding begin to rub off the idol.

Their friendship had lasted between three or four years before this came about, and then its fervour began to cool.

There were two reasons for this,—one personal to John Booth, the other affecting Lydia Hartland, then a fair, well-grown girl in her sixteenth year.

CHAPTER XIV.

FRIENDS AND ASSOCIATES.

INTO a tradesman's open shop enter people of all grades, of all shades of thought and opinion, and over his counter sentiments the most diverse are enunciated. *Then*, when every small manufacturer found it necessary to keep a horse, either for riding or the conveyance of goods, and *there*, where shears, and shuttles, and tenter-hooks were in demand, as well as garden tools and domestic utensils, the ironmonger, who was also a saddler and harness-maker, was a much more important individual than in these days of machinery and swift locomotion. Not only young couples furnishing, but sporting squires and their grooms, woolstaplers and croppers, masters and men, had occasion for Mr. Wright's shop, and met in front of his solitary counter to discuss the news of the day, full in the hearing of the apprentices at work in the rear. Many a controversy was there held, alike with the saddler and with each other. And it was frequently a difficult matter for Aminadab Wright to steer clear of offence when appealed to, so many questions of moment were at issue, and so diverse were opinions thereon.

Amongst others came more than one disciple of Robert Owen, whose new theories of social reform had recently been put forth in a series of essays on the formation of character, under the title of *New Views of Life*. In these essays he contrived to do a great deal of mischief where he only designed to do good, since he (with a difference, it is true) promulgated anew the doctrine of 'Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity,' the

incendiary formula of the terrible French revolutionists. His essays fell into the hands of half-educated, undisciplined men, who took up his theories by the wrong handle, and were for a forcible levelling down, instead of a gradual levelling up.

Of these George Mellor, the pupil of John Baines, was one. He had returned to Huddersfield early in 1808, and was soon after set as foreman over the croppers and raisers at John Wood's, *vice* Sowden deposed.

How this came about was one of those mysteries John Wood kept to himself within those thin, close lips of his. Some said his wife wept and lamented for her son until he was moved to recall him to obtain peace. Others were of opinion that Sowden was too weak and easy to have the command over a rough, rebellious lot of croppers and preemers, and that it was solely in self-interest he had recalled his strong-willed stepson.

He contradicted neither opinion, and he told no one when or how he learned the young man's whereabouts.

Certain it was that a stout-hearted servant woman had walked from Halifax to Longroyd Bridge to ask if aught had been heard of the absentee in all those years; a woman who said her name was Susan, and who upbraided mother and step-father both for the cruelty and injustice which had driven George away, and had nearly been the death of him. He had then been gone five years, and that was the first they had heard of his presence on the overturned coach, or of John Baines the hatter, and his care of the 'ill-used and injured young chap.'

Certain also it is that John Baines had a customer the following Wednesday, one who walked into the Crown Street workshop, where he was blocking a beaver hat, and a lad he called Zachary was dropping cones of felt into a steaming boiler, to be dyed before blocking and dressing; and as certainly John Wood carried home with him a glossy new beaver. But whether Baines served as a medium of communication between the exile and his friends can only be conjectured. Mrs. Wood might not have been told, at any rate she was as silent as her close-lipped spouse.

When, nearly twelve months later, George Mellor appeared at Longroyd, and took the place of Sowden, to that worthy's discomfiture, he was as little communicative as they. He was older, darker, stronger than of old; he ruled the men with a firm, decided will, and was obeyed.

Business took him to Wright's, where he was served by John Booth. That mental force which attracts opposites drew the two together—the porcelain vase and the iron pot; they became friendly and intimate long before Josiah had any inkling of the acquaintance, or a chance to put in a warning word.

It has been said that a Democratic Club was held at the 'Crispin,' under the presidency of the Halifax political hatter. This said inn was an ancient grey stone building, roofed with flagstone, and stood near the very much older church on what was then 'The Causeway,' from which it was entered by a downward step, as if the roadway had at some time been raised. The original edifice has since given place to a new one which audaciously puts forth a sign, the 'Old Crispin;' but it was in the veritable 'Old Crispin' the seditious club held its meetings every Saturday night with closely guarded doors. The members were mostly working men; many came from a distance, and only on the evening when they were paid had they an hour to spare, although they did not assemble until eight.

Of this club George Mellor had been enrolled a member and an active agent, before he went away on his wanderings, the presiding head having found in him a spirit of dogged obstinacy and revolt ripe to receive his revolutionary teaching and pass it on like a fiery cross.

The democratic hatter had two sons, one of whom, a shoemaker, was as devoted to his patron St. Crispin as his father could desire. He had two others, one named Zachary, likely to follow the same lead.

It was, however, his namesake John who, under the pretext that 'Mr. Wright sold better awls, brads, and sparrables than e'er an ironmonger in Halifax,' first aired the Owenite theories in the ears of Booth, with a seasoning of Tom Paine, and finding him attentively listening, although busied stitching a saddle pad, first sent him the questionable essays by the hands of George Mellor, and then through the same medium sent an invitation for the impressionable youth to call on him and his father whenever he passed through Halifax on his way to Lowmoor, the cure of the learned and reverend Greek scholar to whom John Booth owed filial duty.

It was George Mellor who had brought this about.

'You get hold of the Lowmoor parson's son,' he had said.

'He's a precocious chap and a rare scholar. His father must have crammed Greek an' Latin into him with his pap. And he bargained with Mr. Wright for holidays for the lad, so that he might go home to brush up his learning and be examined lest he should lose it all. So he's easy to get at, as he works in the open shop, and comes your way. An' he's easily known, for so much book-learning when a little chap made him thin as a weaver's picking-peg, an' set his lips all on the twitch when excited.'

So it came to be that when John Booth took his doubtful holiday, and walked to Halifax, he unfortunately stopped at the 'Crispin' for a night, though but three miles from home. Again on his return he lingered, each time staying at the 'Crispin,' where the elder Baines introduced him to certain members of the Democratic Club as 'a young man of talent, certain to make a figure in the world, and spread the red banner of freedom abroad to the breeze.'

Good-natured, well-meaning John Booth was no match for the astute, grey-headed Socialist. The youth was weak, impressionable, vain; proud of the 'little Latin and less Greek' which lifted him above ordinary tradesmen's sons, and the social democrat played upon his foible.

Booth returned to his work in Huddersfield smitten with the belief that he had a predestined mission to enlighten his groaning fellow-workmen and indoctrinate them with the glorious principles of 'Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity.' No hero or patriot of classic lore was to outshine him in his career. He, the mere boy! Alas!

Hitherto, notwithstanding his patronage of Josiah Longmore, he had held his fair head somewhat high, but, as if to demonstrate the genuineness of his belief in the principles of universal equality, he began to extend the hand of good fellowship to some very undesirable companions, men who openly scoffed at religion and all things good.

He aired his new notions to Josiah, and would have introduced him into their midst; but the young tailor was older, more stable, had strong religious convictions, and was bent on self-improvement.

'Nay, nay,' said Josiah, 'none of your public-house friends for me. If I spend my little pocket-money in pints of ale and cock-fighting, I should have none to buy books with, or to help

a poor friend. A taste for ale might spoil my taste for better things. And I fear your new companions are doing yo no good : a lot of drunken croppers. Your faither would be rare an' angry if he knew yo went with men so far beneath yo.'

'They are no lower than you were when I found you first. I am above paltry distinctions. I regard all men as my equals. What right has one man to lord it over his fellows? If money makes the difference, let them share it.'

'Hegh, John, yo may have lots of Greek an' Latin in your head, but you want more common sense to balance them. Equal? Do you think yo'd be my equal at a wrestling bout? Do yo think I'd be your equal at a spelling or a writing match? Folk are *not* equal. Some have moore money, others have moore brains; some are tall and others short; some are weak and others strong; some are fair and others dark, like thee and me; some are handsome, others ugly. Why, lad, God does not make them all equal. Did yo ever see two apples alike, or two babies alike? There are big ones and little ones; some laugh an' crow in your face, and others are for ever squalling. No, John, not till you can show me two potatoes alike will I believe in yor new-fangled notion of equality.'

'But, Josiah, does not the Bible *you* rest your faith on tell you that all men are brothers?'

'Does it? Then it points out some brothers it is best to avoid. There are good brothers and bad ones. I'd not mind being brother to "the man who fell among thieves," but I should object to be brother to the thieves.'

'Call my friends thieves? You forget yourself, Josiah. They are all earnest, thinking men, with the good of their suffering brothers at heart;' and Booth turned away in high dudgeon.

'Stay,' said Josiah, laying his hand on the other's arm. 'Yo mistake my meaning. Yo had better come along with me. Those new friends of yours are leading you astray. You will surely lose your time amongst them if yo lose nothing more.'

'What more do you mean? Do you suppose they would rob me of my watch or my purse? they are men of high principle!'

'So high that you will lose your character among them.

Better be robbed of your watch than of that. Come, John, I owe you a good turn, and would fain keep you out of harm's way. I'm older than you, an' know more about th' folk that want you. Theere's some mischief agate I'd have thee keep out of.'

It was no use: Booth shook the other off, and marched back into the town to join a group of loiterers in the Market-place, with whom he remained until a late hour. If he lived under Mr. Wright's roof, after business his time was generally his own, to use or misuse as inclination prompted.

Some weeks had gone by since Josiah had first observed a change in John Booth. At first it was only an occasional excuse for some other engagement, then he began to talk a lot of rhodomontade about 'freedom and liberty,' 'the down-trodden poor,' and 'the tyrannical rich,' and when by chance Josiah met his friend with one or two cloth-dressers whose names were unsavoury, he became urgent to save the weak-minded fellow from being led away. Not that Josiah was blind to the suffering around him, but he had no faith in John Booth's remedy. His well-meant efforts proving fruitless, and producing only coolness, he no longer sought the society of the wilful young saddler, out of regard for his own good name; though it went to his grateful heart to see his generously gratuitous instructor so misled. When they did meet, he missed no opportunity to warn him against the hidden rocks in his course. His difficulty was that he could bring no specific charges save drunkenness and gambling against Booth's new associates, and those were not vices confined to a class.

He had, moreover, another and greater disquiet traceable to the alteration in John Booth.

Sunday had been the only day at the command of either for the giving or receiving of set lessons, although Josiah kept a book in his breeches pocket for study at the 'nooninscaup,'[1] and in that way had contrived both to enlarge his vocabulary and to acquire some insight into grammar, history, and so forth, every farthing he could spare or save going for books. It was not much, since he had an ambition to dress respectably, to speak correctly, and did not, like so many young fellows of this generation, shirk his responsibilities towards his parents.

[1] Nooninscaup—the resting-time for dinner—a compound of *noon* and *scope* (liberty).

Yet, long before he came in contact with John Booth, he had promised his Sundays to the Hartlands. His own brothers, estranged by early apprenticeship away from home, had formed acquaintance among cliques of their own, and did not want him. Indeed, in their illiterate self-conceit they jeered at his incomprehensible bookishness. They had different pursuits, and went their different ways. It had been better for them had their leanings been as harmless.

He was free to keep his promise to Benjy and the rest; but, in order at the same time to obtain the tutorship of Booth without denying himself the pleasure of a day at Side-o'-Beck, he had at the outset persuaded the latter to join him there, or on the moor, a few Sunday afternoons, until the habit grew, and John was ere long welcomed not merely for the sake of Josiah, but for his own.

This was about the time poverty first began to make inroads on the comfort of the tailor's family; and very soon after, flaxen-haired, nimble-fingered Lydia, under the hard pressure of necessity, was sent out to earn her own living as a piecer at a new worsted spinning mill near Linley, about two miles south-east of Side-o'-Beck, over the moor.

The need for this step had caused both Marian and Walter much uneasiness. Not that they had desired to keep the girl without a means of self-support, but she was a great help to her mother; and the tales they had heard of the cruel treatment of the 'pieceners' by the slubbers or spinners were not encouraging. But either she or Mary would have to go, and as she was not only a year older than her sister and more than years steadier,—Mary was a frisky romp,—the lot fell on her. The others might have to follow in time.

Lydia herself was about eleven when she first went to the factory to stand behind the newly-introduced machine, called a 'billy,' since superseded by the mule, but then, in conjunction with a carding machine, taking employment out of the hands of domestic spinsters, though the rapid multiplication of mills and machines promised mill-work for many.

It is a common supposition that the old hand-spinners, whether by distaff or by wheel, converted a mass of raw flax or wool into a fine yarn by one operation.

Nothing of the kind. The first spinning only drew the loose fibres together in a thick, half-twisted line. A second

and more dexterous manipulation was required to draw out and twist the short, thick cord into a long, fine, even yarn. But the best spinner was unable to produce evenness as now understood.[1] The carding machine carried the wool over a succession of cards, or fine wire brushes on rollers, which acted on the tangled fibres much as a hairbrush on a lady's tresses, but it also sent them in a broad, delicate film through a small brass funnel, whence it emerged as a soft rouleau about the thickness of a lady's finger.

The billy—an adaptation of Hargreaves' spinning jenny to worsted—was a sort of square frame with spindles or bobbins at one end, and a wheel at the side to be turned by a handle, which set the whole in motion, a handle soon superseded by driving-bands. At the end opposite to the rows of spindles was a sloping board for the reception of the soft, thick, fleecy rouleaus close together in parallel lines, whence they were drawn out in fine, thin, slightly-twisted lines of yarn, obedient to the turning of the wheel.

It was the duty of Lydia (and of others much younger than herself) to stand in front of one of these sloping boards and feed the machine with these thick rolls, being ready, when one was nearly drawn out exhausted, to attach another by rolling the two dexterously together with the palm of her hand upon the board. And woe betide the little lass if eye or hand was not quick enough to watch and piece a retreating length before it was drawn clean away from the board, and the slubber had to stop his machine to reconnect the line.

Sharp words and smart blows fell to her lot, and often the blows came first, when the slubber had generally a cane or a stick handy.

Early training and trouble had made of Lydia a grave and patient child, though quick and nimble. At the same time, the solitude of her home on the moor had made her shy among strangers, and little inclined to mingle with the rough and boisterous 'pieceners' amongst whom she was thrown.

This last, and the distance she would have to travel night and morning, had made the putting out of Lydia a subject of anxious debate at Side-o'-Beck, and had Marian's wheel been

[1] I have in my possession some fine handspun linen thread from my grandfather's warehouse in Manchester. Its uneven variations in places demonstrate this.

as profitable as of yore, it would not have been thought of. But an increasing family and a decreasing income made even a child's earnings matter for consideration.

'Never fear for Lyddy,' put in Josiah, when he was taken into confidence. 'Our hours are a'moast the same, and I'll see her safe theere an' bring her back at neight.' This sent him far out of the way over the rough moorland, but he did not mind that.

Waiting for her as the best of brothers might, near the factory gates, at eight o'clock on Saturday night (or half-past if payment of the hands were slow), he had asked her at the end of the first week—

'How do you like your new work?'

'Not much. Them billies make such a huzz-buzz in my ears, all gooin' at once. An' th' lasses stare, an' say—oh, such shocking things! even little uns, no older than our Mary or Benjy. An' th' slubber gies one th' stick a'moast fur nowt. But I'll sooin get used to the wark, an then happen it won't tire my arms an' legs so much. An' see, I'se got a shilling and ninepence to carry hoam. Some on 'em only arn eighteenpence; but th' slubber telled me I should soon arn two shilling, an' happen three in time, if I kept steady.'

'I'd like to gie th' slubber th' stick fur using it on thee,' cried Josiah; 'maisters have no reight to set such brutes ower lasses.'

'Hegh, 'Siah! But some on 'em dun deserve it, lakin'[1] when they should mind theer wark, an' stopping the men's wark too. He shaun't ha' need to thresh me lang.'

'I'll thresh him if he does,' was Josiah's prompt rejoinder.

'Nay, lad, no feighting. An' dunnot yo tell mother as he struck me. Shu'd fret, tha knows.'

These journeys together to and fro were mutually advantageous. They preserved her from contact with girls or boys likely to corrupt her morals, or destroy the purity of her mind when factory work was over. They kept Josiah likewise out of evil company, and whilst other lads of his own age were playing at chuck-farthing, or at cock-throwing, he was most frequently imparting to her some wonderful scrap of knowledge obtained from his new friend.

By the time the girl had fairly entered her teens, that new

[1] Lakin'—playing.

friend had invited himself to join them, as he said, 'for a stroll after business hours' at least three nights out of the six, leaving them when they reached Out Lane, and for a year or two Josiah was as pleased to have his company as was Lydia, and certainly his conversation and his manner had more than the charm of novelty for her.

As time advanced, matters began to wear another aspect. It needed not the admiration in John Booth's eyes to tell that Lydia, in spite of her rough brat,[1] her clogs, her dark woollen skirt, and printed neckerchief, was growing surpassingly fair.

She had her mother's flaxen hair, her dark blue eyes, her clear fair skin, the roses on her cheeks that Marian had lost; but she had her father's features, his fearless tread and bearing, and was tall beyond her years. She had ceased to be a piecer, and Mary had taken her place, whilst she had other work in the sorting room for which she was better paid.[2]

But that had nothing to do with John Booth's admiration, or the pain it gave Josiah Longmore to find himself of less account in Lydia's estimation; she unconsciously pairing off with the former in the walk home at night, and leaving the latter to take charge of Mary, and listen to her complaints of the slubber's cruelty, when in her frolicsome moods she preferred 'lakin'' to attention, and got into disgrace.

He listened, and gave her good advice, as one much older than herself, yet the fact that he was superseded elsewhere hurt his feelings.

'It's only natural she should like John best,' he told himself over and over again; 'he's nearer her own age, an' is never at a loss for a word, and has gentle, womanish ways with him. And why should I grumble? He's been a good friend to me. But for him and what he's taught me, I should never have got to be foreman and cutter at Sykes's. I shall have to teach myself not to be selfish.'

In pursuance of his plan for self-abnegation, he took charge

[1] Brat—a closely-fitted wrapper pinafore worn by factory girls.

[2] The fleece as shorn from the sheep hangs together and retains the shape of the animal. Each fleece contains many different qualities of wool, varying with the breed of sheep also. The wool-sorter, with nice, discriminating touch, had to pull these separate qualities apart, and set them in sieves for attendant girls to carry to their respective heaps, or to weigh out for the wool-comber or the machine. A careless girl might work incalculable mischief in this department.

of Mary, whenever John presented himself, without a word of dissent, though he felt very keenly the indifference with which he was set aside.

Even on Sundays he began to ramble off with David over the black or purpled moor, with Benjy mounted on the shoulders of one or other—the child of ten years small as one of five; or Josiah would sit among the children by the rushy beck-side, reading aloud to them some entertaining or instructive book he had borrowed, whilst Curly gambolled amongst the grass and heather, or lay at Benjy's feet blinking and dozing in the sun, Lydia and John entertaining each other apart.

But no sooner did he discover his friend John's growing tendencies, and the places he frequented with his new associates, than in alarm he took his old position once more by Lydia's side, and kept there.

He said nothing to the disparagement of John, but, ever on the alert to guard her pure mind from possible contamination, frequently put in a word to controvert demoralising arguments. And at last he roused obtuse David to a sense of brotherly responsibility.

In protecting Lydia, he suspected no possible danger elsewhere.

CHAPTER XV.

A BOLD CHAMPION.

WHEN George Mellor had turned his back on Huddersfield and all it contained, he had gone forth with a stern resolve never to return, never again to cross the threshold of his stepfather's premises. The raging winds had but fanned the fierceness of his mood, his accident did not serve to tame him. What influence had been brought to bear upon him, what inducement had been held out to undermine his resolve and cause his return, was never known. Question and conjecture were alike at fault. He never replied to the former, never gave assurance to the latter.

'Ah!' said Sowden, when in the course of a few weeks George Mellor was placed in authority over the croppers, and he sank at once to a subordinate position with reduced wages; 'so that's what brought Mellor back—come to crow o'er owder and better workmen than hissen!'

'Dost think so?' put in Thorpe from Fisher's, who stood on the bridge with him; 'then thou's none but thysen to thank for that. I'se heard Maister Wood times out o' mind tell thee thou wanted firmness to deal with both men an' lads under thee. Dost think such chaps as th' Walkers, or Smith, or Hill, ay, or mysen, are to be governed by a timorous chap like thee? Nay, if John Wood had a hand in bringing Mellor back, he must ha' felt th' need o' his stepson's firmness and strength of will. Thou'rt a rush, an' George Mellor's an iron

bar. He might command an army; as for thee, why, thou caun't rule thy own wife an' bairns.'

The speaker, with a curl of contempt on his lips, turned on his heel towards Fisher's cropping shop, heedless of the lowering brows or the muttered rejoinder of the deposed foreman, as he, too, left the bridge for the workshop.

'Ay, Mellor's a bar of iron, no doubt; but it's red hot, an' it's much to me if maister dunnot burn his fingers wi' it ere lang. I'se for peace an' quiet, an' theere's like to be little o' that now he's back. But quiet folk con feel, an' I may ha' summat to say to thee some o' these days, Maister William Thorpe.'

George Mellor did rule the men and boys with a firm hand, but he and his stepfather no longer came into collision. Some there were who said that he overruled John Wood, but others more than hinted at some secret understanding between the twain, as time went by, and the cloth-finisher's business grew so rapidly as to make a second shop a necessity.

How it was no one could tell, but the dark-browed, stern young man, whose hot temper was so soon alight, seemed to be a magnet to attract the small cloth-weavers from hill and valley, far and wide.

In those days few manufactures were begun and completed in one building, or one set of premises. Here and there a man with capital erected a mill, introduced machinery, and so carried on several processes under his own roof. But even he was compelled to employ others to carry the work through certain stages ere he had the goods finished for sale to the merchant. This was especially the case in the manufacture of textile fabrics in the early years of the century. In the needle trade of Redditch the practice was general even forty years back.

In George Mellor's time there were weavers who received the prepared warp and weft from the wool-staplers (who either had spinning billies at work for them, or hand-spinners working in their own homes), and who afterwards returned the undressed and undyed cloth they had woven, receiving a fixed price for their labour, from which there were frequently deductions made by the master for reasons real or spurious, often the latter. At the best the weaver so employed could barely earn eighteen shillings a week. If his wife chanced to

be a warper, as in Thomas Longmore's case, there was an addition to the sum, but not much.

There were other weavers, masters in a small way, who turned the services of every member of a large family to account, and, buying their own wool from the wool-comber, had it converted into cloth, which they sold on their own account in the grey state, or sent to be milled, dyed, and finished by others, and returned to them for sale.

These were the men who came with ends of cloth upon their heads or on their saddle-bows, to such places as Halifax, Huddersfield, or Dewsbury, from towns and villages far and wide, for there, beside the many streams of water, were the finishers alone to be found.

It turned out that wheresoever George Mellor had wandered during his six years' absence, he had brought back with him a knowledge of not only the West of England cloth manufacture, but of the inroads one machine after another was making upon hand labour, whether in the lace, hosiery, cotton, or wool trade, and of the thousands of work-people miserably starving.

'Now,' he said, as if with the voice of prophecy, 'a billy that a man and a child can mind can fill twenty spindles in less time than th' women on your own hearths can fill one, an' they'll sooin ha' th' mule here as is spinning fifty cops[1] at once in Manchester an' Darby. An do yo think they'll stick theere? Why, here's already th' gig machine and a shearer at work, takin' th' bread out o' th' mouths o' th' raisers an' croppers; an' theere's sure to be a wood an' iron demon *weaving* without hands sooin. It's th' weaver's turn next. The wool-comber's comb, an' post, an' comb pot have already got a fiendish rival grinning at them with a hundred teeth for one.'

'Is that true?' some startled clothier or wool-comber would ask.

'True? ay. Go you to Dacre's mill, or to Bradley's or Horsley's, or to Wainwright's, an' see what's being done, an' then prepare for what's to come, an' the poorhouse to follow if no stop be put to it. In my opinion, th' folk as invent, or make, or employ such machines deserve to be shot.'

[1] The cop is the yarn spun on the spindle, and slipped off or doffed when it is filled.

And so, with a voice of power and passion, he would declaim, the veins of his forehead rising and swelling as he spoke, and the weavers would carry off the news and the arguments to their homes in hillside nooks, until the subtle poison had spread and ramified beyond calculation.

He discussed politics in a like spirit, denouncing the oppressive laws, and the tyranny of the aristocracy as well as the manufacturers; and here came in John Booth to second him, the grace of education adorning his speech and arguments.

Mr. John Wood's cropping shop thus obtained notoriety anything but enviable as a seat of disaffection, but the owner only blinked at it obliquely, and rubbed his hands over one another in complacent silence, whilst he counted up his gains from the fresh customers who came to listen as much as to have their cloth dressed by the old methods, instead of the new processes available.

But whenever a chance word called forth his stepson's fiery spirit, he discreetly withdrew to the raising shop close by. There the workmen stood two on each side a long double board, shelving like the roof of a house, across which the broadcloth was laid, whilst they, with paddles or cross-shaped brushes set with teazles[1] on the underside, laboriously brushed up with each hand at once the loose fibres of wool into a thick pile, to be presently cropped or sheared smooth and even.

And there, or by the fulling stocks, where the cloth lay in water-troughs to be pounded and milled with heavy beams or mallets, or in the tenter-field, where it hung to dry, or in the press-room, where it was brushed and glossed, he would affect to be so busy giving instructions to his men, or quietly chiding them for inattention, as to have no ears for aught that was passing in the outer shop. If it happened to be the 'noonin-scaup,' and any of the men from Fisher's cropping shop over the way had drifted in to have a talk with Mellor, the step-father was sure to be dining with his wife in the houseplace, and grumbling no doubt, at her son for letting his dinner go cold.

He was never there to overhear. Oh no! They might talk treason if they liked, but no one should have the chance

[1] Teazles, or fuller's thistle—the ripe and dried heads of the *Dipsacus fullonum*.

of saying *he* countenanced the proceedings. Wary Mr. John Wood!

'You really must be more careful, George. I know you hold very strong opinions on some subjects, and I am told you and your young friend Booth express your sentiments with most indiscreet vehemence. You should be more cautious,' he was overheard to say.

'Caution be hanged! Is not the trade of the country going to ruin?' was the impatient answer, as with a deprecatory uplifting of eyelids and hands the elder turned away, apparently unaware that there had been a listener on the other side the raising board.

Shortly after this, the master croppers, meeting in and around the Cloth Hall on the market day, came to an understanding that, unless wages were lowered, they could not compete with the finishers raising and cropping by machinery. Yet it was an indubitable fact that, though the trade in camlets, calimancoes, serges, and figured stuffs generally, was at a low ebb, the cloth manufacture was flourishing, with machinery or without.

The worsted and stuff manufacturers had, however, found it needful to meet the merchants with reduced prices, and wages fell in consequence.

The master croppers, who had really no such excuse, took advantage of this, and made a prompt reduction in the wages of their men. 'If they grumble,' one of these masters had said, 'tell them we will get machines and do without one-half of them!'

Mr. John Wood waited until the reduction was made by others, before, with a deprecatory rubbing over and over of his hands, he called his men together on the pay-day, and with many expressions of regret announced 'the necessity he was under.'

'Why, maister, dun yo mean as us hard-workin' croppers are to carry hoam two pounds on a Seterday neight instead o' two guineas?' asked Sowden, for the rest.

'What's that?' burst in George Mellor, as if he knew nothing of the business on foot. 'I shall stand out against that. Reduction here, reduction there! How are poor fellows to live and keep their families if wages go down when trade is good?'

He was himself a workman in receipt of wages, and if he had no private arrangement with his stepfather, the question affected him personally.

'Well, George, I cannot row against the stream. The weavers and clothiers will take their goods to be finished where it can be done the cheapest.'

'Ay, sure, that's but natural,' was the simultaneous assent of the men waiting around.

'Well, my men, we hand-croppers have been told that unless we can finish an end of broadcloth as cheaply and well as Bradley, or Horsley, or Wainwright, they will not come out of their way carrying cloth to us to pay more. I was the last to give in, as I've been the last to make the reduction. What could I do when the others threatened to set up machines and get rid of half their men if they were unreasonable and grumbled?'

'Hang the machinery!' cried Mellor; 'it's driving honest and industrious families to desperation and the poorhouse. I've seen what it has done in other parts. We're well off in Huddersfield to what they are where machinery is in full swing, with steam power to keep it going. I expect we shall be having it here next, if a stop's not put to it. It was a feast to my eyes to see Bradley's mill burnt down with its new machines in it the year I came home. But whoever set it alight lost his labour. It was soon up again bigger than before, with two new machines for one old one.'

'Ah!' put in John Wood, as he handed his wages to the first of the workmen, deducting for a day of drunken idleness; 'the insurance company paid for that.'

Ay,' was his stepson's sharp rejoinder; 'but if I'd my way, no office would insure machinery.'

'Well, George, but you must own that hand-cropping is severe and laborious work; the hoof on the cropper's wrist tells that. The machine that shears the cloth so easily and smoothly does lighten labour!' fell from the lips of John Wood like oil on fire.

'Lighten it? Supersedes it, you mean! Sends two skilled workmen packing, and sets one fellow with a wrist as smooth as a woman's to watch the shears that have cut down his own wage, and sent better workmen adrift to starve. If ever one of those confounded machines comes into this shop, I'll wrest

Enoch Taylor's hammer out of his hand and smash the machine to bits. I swear I will!' And as he poured forth the vehement protest, the black eyes of Mellor gleamed like coals of fire.

'Nay, nay, lad, do keep thy temper. I'm not like to bring machinery here. I'd sooner shut up the shop altogether an' give up business. Me and thy mother could live on what I've laid by. An' it may come to that, if fresh factories are built, an' wages come down till a man cannot get a fair week's wage for a fair week's work.'

'It shall never come to that whilst I live,' cried Mellor, with an oath; 'I know how to prevent that.'

'Yo dun? How so?' questioned one or another eagerly.

'That's *my* secret; and secrets are not for all ears,' was the incisive reply, as the speaker shut close his lips and strode away.

The last man departed with his wages paid, but not one more word of protest against the coming reduction had been made. Some of them loitered on the bridge, others strayed into the public-house close by, all loud in argument, some cursing machinery, others giving their master credit for good feeling and fair dealing, but one and all agreeing that George Mellor was 'a fine young chap, a bold champion of their reights,' and every one curious to learn his 'saicret.'

Nay, not all. Sowden lingered behind on the bridge, and leaning over the parapet in a favourite attitude, as if meditatively watching a boat on the new canal, cut parallel to the river, murmured to himself, 'An old fox, an' a young wolf. What fooils th' men wur to be takken in. I saw through it a', if I hadno th' courage of a mon to speak out. Two shillin' a week less is a pull now meal an' bread's soa dear. If my bairns hadno work i' Bradley mills, it 'ud goo hard wi' them. Nance'll be in a rare stew. But theere's mischief brewin' i' George Mellor's brain, an' if John Wood dunno stir th' wort, it's mich to me. Ay, theere's moore i' Maister George's saicret than folk may think. But I say nowt. Keep eyes and ears open, an' mouth shut, is my maxim. It's safe and sure for a peaceful mon. If George Mellor doesno mind, he'll put a rope round his own neck some o' these days. But I say nowt.'

BOOK THE SECOND

CHAPTER I

AN IMPORTANT LETTER.

AMONGST the many led or drawn towards John Wood's was Walter Hartland. There, and at Fisher's close by, he had customers, masters and men both, and business took him there from time to time, more frequently as his trade fell off in other quarters, when the heavy taxes, the scarcity and high prices of provisions, left small margin for hard-pressed or ill-paid tradesmen and work-people to indulge in new garments.

George Mellor in his youth had been no favourite of his, but a kind of sympathy had been felt for the young man as a joint sufferer by the great storm of 1802, coming as it did so closely upon his self-imposed exile from home. The change wrought in him during his travels had struck the tailor as it had struck others. He had seemed to develop into a man brimming over with indignation for the wrongs inflicted on the industrious and suffering poor. John Booth was loud in praise of his friend Mellor, and his enthusiasm swept away Hartland's 'old prejudices,' as he began to call them. And when the black-browed cropper, in the midst of a harangue on the distress amongst the weavers of Lancashire, and the stockingers and pillow-lace workers of Nottingham, called upon Hartland, then entering the shop, to confirm the truth of his statement, as one who had travelled and knew, the latter found himself adding his testimony before he had time to give a second thought to the weight of his opinion.

Newspapers at the time were few and dear, the paper was taxed in the ream, and not a newspaper dared be issued that did not bear a threepenny stamp. This stamp, however, freed the paper through the post for a fortnight after publication, and now and then Robin or his wife sent a week-old copy of the *Nottingham Review* or the *Nottingham Journal*, which had gone already through many hands.

'Why, I'se got a newspaper i' my pocket now, that I browt to town for John Booth,' he said. 'Yo can have it if yo'll turn it over to him when yo han read it out here;' and he offered the small well-worn sheet of the *Review* to Mellor, who snatched it eagerly.

'Here's a prize!' he cried. 'We see nowt here but the *Leeds Mercury*, as we subscribe for amongst us. Sevenpence a week is too much for any working man to give for a newspaper these times.'

'Yo may han all Robin Greenwood sends us,' volunteered Hartland. 'He sends them to save th' trouble an' expense of letters; they cost him nowt but thanks.'

The proposal was eagerly accepted, and Walter stood pledged to more than he could foresee.

'Hearken, men!' cried Mellor in excitement, referring to the paper he had been reading; 'here's a state of things for a Christian land. Hearken! Frame knitters of Nottingham are compelled to sweep the streets of the town for a paltry pittance that will scarcely serve to keep life and soul together. And they have to thank the overseers of St. Mary's for that, not the greedy masters who have set wood and iron to do their work and fill their purses. Ay, an' filled the poorhouse too, with women an' bairns, till theere's no room for the fathers and brothers: women and bairns as helped to keep th' home before the spinning jenny an' th' lace machine robbed them of their handicrafts. Ah, my brothers, think what the masters have to answer for who have driven industrious men and their families to such a pinch of destitution. Retribution will surely be exacted ere long. Flesh and blood cannot stand ravenous hunger.'

'I'd noan stond it!' came from one or another, grimly.

'Stand it? Do you think as they'll stand it much longer?' burst from Mellor, whose eyes flashed fiercely, his whole attitude betokening defiance. 'I tell you, lads, there'll be a stir

afore long as will make them big mill-owners shake in their shoes. Why, Hartland here could tell you there's not one of them but what's grown too fine an' grand to have a coat made by a homely, honest, hard-working tailor like him, as once was good enough to work for Horsley of Marsden, Armitage of Woodbottom, an' Wainwright of Greenfolds. Now, nowt will serve the upstarts of the big mills, who grow fat as poor folk grow lean, but Sykes, the fine tailor by the Cloth Hall, who's got Hartland's own 'prentice as foreman o'er a shop full of men. I tell you, lads, the working world's got turned upside down, but theere's them in Nottingham an' other places as mean to set it straight afore long.'

'An' hah's that gooin' to be done, George?' queried Sowden quietly.

'Wait, an' you'll see. When th' chick's ready, it will chip its shell. When the seed's ripe, the pods burst.' And towards the house George turned for his noonday meal, as if restraining his own tongue.

Hartland returned home with corduroy for a child's suit, and striped camlet for a tradesman's waistcoat, but that was all, except an old jacket to be cleaned and cut down for a boy.

On the Friday following, as he and David sat at work cross-legged on their board, and Benjy was quietly amusing himself with a pair of knitting-needles and a quantity of waste thrums and healds brought by Josiah, the loud blast of a horn was heard in the distance.

'There's the postman!' cried David gleefully.

Down went the jacket he was lining; he was off the board in a jiffy; his clogs were on his feet, and away he went flying through the garth in his shirt sleeves, to meet the man with the long tin horn, two or three hundred yards away, and back he came at a run, flourishing a letter and proclaiming aloud, 'Post paid! post paid!' as if the unwonted prepayment of eightpence was something to rejoice at.

'Read it lad, read it!' cried his father, leaning forward. 'Let's hear what Robin thinks of my gooing theere.'

The letter was evidently a reply to an inquiry prompted by the narrowing of Hartland's home custom.

Marian left the work she was doing, bade Robby take Silas into the garth, and came towards the table, whilst David cut carefully round the wafer that secured the folded quarto sheet,

and, leaning one hastily wiped hand upon his shoulder, looked over the broad page whilst her son cleverly interpreted what to her were mere hieroglyphics :—

'SHERWOOD FOREST, *February* 1811.

'*DEAR BROTHER AND SISTER,— This comes hoping things is better with you than they was when you wrote. They are bad about here. We can mannish to pull on, though things are so dear, for us keepers has many helps as the poor frame knitters don't have, though wages doesn't go far. There's the garden and pig, and never a want of a rabbit or bird for the pot, or firewood to keep it boiling.*' (As he read this, Marian sighed heavily at the vision of what she thought profusion.) '*Then the housekeeper at the Hall sends many a pie or other nice things for mother, who keeps hearty, as we all are, thank God! But it's no use thinking to find tailoring work about here. The poor frame-work knitters is starving, as the papper we sent you would tell, both them as han work, and them as han none, for the wages paid goes nowheere now. Meal and potatoes is so dear, and the poaching as goes on is not to be reckoned. Robin says it goes to his heart to take up a poor fellow whose wife and children hanna a blessed bit to put in theer mouth*' (again Marian sighed, though matters had not yet reached that pass with them,) '*or fire or clothes to keep them warm. There's none but th' gentlemon farmers, the mestur frame knitters, or lace wayvers as could find you work, and now they're too proud to wear breeches like their faithers, but must don them long tight things as come down to their ankles, pantaloons they calls them. And now, John says, theyn getten a machine as con knit or weave fine black worsted pantaloons as will fit a mon almost like his skin.*'

'Goodness, lad! what's that thou's readin'? Weaving pantaloons in th' stockin' frame? Why, that'll cut th' tailor's trade down to nowt!' burst from Walter Hartland in gasps. 'George Mellor's reight. Machinery's playing the very hangment with all on us. But goa on, lad, goa on.'

David did go on—

'*John says there'll be a rumpus before long, for some on them new machines make stockings as poor and thin as one con pick straws through, spoiling th' trade, an' the mesturs are setting colts to work them*'—

He paused. 'Colts? What are colts?'

'Them as hanno been 'prenticed to larn the trade,' answered his mother promptly.

'Oh!' and, enlightened, David proceeded—

'*We hear a lot from poor folk as come begging to th' door, or drop down in the Forest fainting with hunger, on theer way from Mansfield or Worksop, to see if they con get work in Nottingham; some on them women with lace-cushions, trying to sell their work; some on them spinners, offering to do a day's turn at mother's wheel to get a bit of bread for a crying child.*' ('Poor creatures!' interjected Marian, with moist eyes.) '*And we hear from our lad Ned, who is learning frame-setting at Wrigley's, and from brother John, too, for since that stang-riding sobered him a bit, he took to work, and we don't mind his coming here with Patty, though they mostly want summat, fur theyn been awful badly off, and they telled us theere's been awful work in Leicester, and it all began with a lad named Ned Ludd or Ludham, who worked fur his faither, a stockinger. We dunnot know the rights on the case, nor when it was, but it seems that Ned Ludd's faither telled him to square his needles, and he up with his frame hammer, and beat his needles all into a heap, and all the men and 'prentices in the shop clapped their hands, an' shouted hurra!*'

Walter Hartland started. Was this what George Mellor had foretold?

'Square his needles? Mother, what does that mean?' asked David.

'Well, Davy,' she replied, 'I don't know as I con make yow understond, but the needles in a stockin' frame are not smooth an' straight all along like them Benjy's larnin' to knit with. Instead of coming to a straight point, they turn back with a flexible hook like a long flattened fish-hook. Theere are two rows of these, reet opposite to the knitter, as he sits in his frame, and they look like the teeth of a fine steel comb, they are so close together. Well, the thread has to go across one row of these needles for the hooks to catch it and carry it through the last row of loops as quick as light, and theere's a thing called a presser as shuts or opens these hooks when the knitter puts his feet on the proper treadles. So thou

sees if th' needles warr not all straight and square and even as a new comb, but the least bit crooked, the hooks would catch, an' drag the thread or worsted, an' spoil both stockin' and frame. An' that Ned Ludham must have been a downreet bad lad to use his hammer to destroy his own faither's property.'

'It may have been one of the new frames,' suggested Walter Hartland. 'The others would never have shouted hurra if th' lad had no reight on his side.'

'He'd a reet to keep his needles square, new frame or old, and he'd a reet to obey his faither, and th' men as shouted were worse than th' lad.'

Walter Hartland felt this was not a point to be argued with his wife in the presence of his own sons, so he simply bade David 'get on.'

'*Robin says as there's mischief of some sort brewin', for John and Joe Wrigley have been so thick together latterly; an' theere's been so much whispering and hinting, an' so much cursing of th' master hosiers reet and left. And he and the other keepers han come on large bands o' men in th' open parts o' th' Forest at neet, an' been warned off fur theer lives. An' some o' th' men were preaching to th' rest, an' some were ordering others to march and halt like soldiers. And they wur ne'er to be found two neets i' th' same part. Burn this letter lest it should get us into trouble, but don't let Walter come seekin' work in these parts, for theere's none to be had. We han put our Bill to larn shoemakin', for they canna get machines to make shoes. Mother sends her love an' blessing to yow both, an' says yow mun hae patience, an' trust in God Almighty fur better days.—So no more from them as loves yow true, and wishes yow well,*

'*Robin and Nell Greenwood.*'

'It's a long letter,' remarked David. 'I never knew Aunt Nell to write so much before. She hardly left room for the wafer.' But he made no comment on her grammar; his own education had not sufficed to make him critical.

'Ah,' sighed Marian, 'mother's reet; there's nowt fur it but patience and trust in God!' and she went back to her washing-up in the back kitchen, where she could wipe the moisture from her eyes with the corner of her old check apron unobserved.

She had seen the clenched hands and heard the muttered exclamation of her husband, 'Patience? It's well fur folk to preach patience from th' warm chimbly neuk, wi' a full pot boilin' o'er, an' wages regular! There's not much patience i' men whose wives and bairns drop wi' hunger by th' rooadside; or them who sit under a roof, and see poverty on the threshold.'

'Nay, faither; it's not so bad as that wi' us yet.'

'It sooin will be, lad, if summat be not done sooin. We're none so well paid as to bide lakin' half our time. What art a gooin' to do wi' that letter?' demanded Hartland, in a changed and peremptory tone.

'Burn it, as Aunt Nell tells us,' replied David, who had moved towards the fireplace.

'Hang thy Aunt Nell! Give the letter to me;' and, leaning over from the board, he snatched the folded letter from the hand of the young man, who looked in his face with some surprise, as he saw the paper thrust into his father's gaping breeches pocket, and heard him mutter between his teeth, 'I must hear what George Mellor thinks on this.'

Little Benjy, sitting in his rush chair, had been an attentive listener. He was twelve years old, though his pale, thin face and hands were those of a much younger child. He was wont to sit and muse and reflect. 'David!' he called, in his thin voice.

David, about to spring on the board, was by his side in a moment, bending his head down, obedient to a sign.

'Davy, if faither cannot get moore wark, will Robby have to goa to th' mill wi' Liddy and Mary?' he whispered in his ear.

'I'm afraid so. But there's lads younger than him as go. He's eight year old, and Liddy con look after him.'

'Will they thresh Robby as they thresh Mary?'

'Not if he minds his work.'

'Oh!' Then in a sort of wail, 'I wish I could do summat to help. But I mean to do summat, an' thou'll see;' and the poor boy's face lit up.

'That's a brave lad,' returned his elder brother, patting his light-brown curls.

In another minute Davy was on the board with the half-lined jacket on his knees. The little fellow was again busy with his knitting-pins, and something soft and shaggy was growing under his hands.

Now that work was slack, the tailors left the board at dusk to save candles, and then father and son both took a turn in the cultivation of their small patch of ground, which was far less productive than of old, owing to the want of proper tillage; manure that had to be brought in baskets strapped on women's backs being dear and scarce, now that coin was growing scarce.

That evening,—it was the first of March,—without waiting for his customary bowl of porridge, Walter put on his coat and soft felt hat, both discoloured with much wear, and leaving David, with Robby by his side, to dig in for manure the few ashes supplied by their winter fire, he took his way downhill with long strides.

'Where's thy faither gone, Davy? Did he say?' asked Marian.

'No; but I think he has gone to show Aunt Nell's letter to George Mellor. He said he should.'

She leaned against the doorpost for support. A chill foreboding seemed to strike her, such as had presaged the fatal night of storm.

CHAPTER II

IN THE GRIP OF AN IRON HAND.

ALTHOUGH Huddersfield had grown considerably since the time Hartland brought a wife within its parochial bounds, and had sent out feelers on many of its picturesque hillsides and into quiet nooks, in the form of mills which drew population after them, the rough black moorlands were by no means intersected by public roads and country lanes or bye-paths as at present. There was no short cut for Wat to take in his haste or impatience, no new broad highway to shorten distance, and to strike out an untrodden path in the twilight would have been madness.

As he passed Longmore's, Betty stood outside gathering in the warps she had hung on outdoor posts and lines to dry in the brisk March wind, at the same time holding a high-toned conversation with her next neighbour.

'Hegh, Hartland! Wheere ta bahn so late? Coom in an' have a pipe wi' Tom; he'n be reight-down glad to see thee, an' hear th' news.'

'I caun't. I'se in a hurry.' But he did not say he was bound for Huddersfield, as he might have said another time, and in a different mood.

'Wur theere any bad news i' your letter, Wat?' she called after him, with little of modern reticence, and a clear indication that its arrival was no private affair, seeing that the postman had passed her door.

'No good news,' he called back over his shoulder, as he

strode on past one or two more cottages in the course of erection, whose builders were then collecting their tools to go homeward.

'Good-neet,' cried one of the masons to him.

'Good-neet,' he responded mechanically, but irritably.

'Hegh! what's coom t' th' chap? Summat's gone wrang,' said the man to his mates, looking after well-known Wat, whose pace had not slackened.

As he turned abruptly into the high-road, he brushed past a sturdy young woman, with her face set towards Halifax, and barely apologised, although in jostling against her she narrowly escaped a fall from the elevated footway into the cart track, muddy from the previous day's rain.

'Well,' said she, turning half round and watching his retreating figure, 'yo're about as civil as George Mellor. My neam's not Susan, if I knaw what's coom to th' men! After walking a' the way from Halifax just to get a kind word from George, though I was fair pining to have a talk with him, he cut me off short, an' axed what I'd coom theere fur! An' when I telled him I wur after a place at th' "Plough," to be near him, he telled me to goa back an' be content wheere I was; I saw as much on him as wur good fur oather on us. Heigho! I wishes he wur a poor runaway lad again. It's that owd Baines as have turned his head. But if yon's his faither's place, it's nobbut natural he should be ashamed of having a poor servant lass cooming after him theere. I'se ne'er goa theere again 'bout he axes me. An' I'se no goa to the "Plough." I con bide at th' "Crispin," an' watch fur him cooming to th' club. He's noan ashamed to gie me a word theere. Heigho! I wishes I'd ne'er ha' seen him; that I dun. If he's gooin' to be th' great mon as Zach says, he'll ne'er want owt o' me. Heigho! I wish them black eyes o' hisn hadno burned so big a hole in my poor heart.'

So sighing and soliloquising, Susan bent herself resolutely to her late and long walk home to Halifax, resigning her prospect of a better situation at the 'Plough,' at the mere bidding of the man she had set up as an idol, and who could well have dispensed with her idolatry.

Under the overarching tracery of leafless boughs, round more than one high spur of blue slate or flagstone, leaving the cross and bridge and quarries of savage Elland behind, halting

for breath on Salter-Hebble Bridge (where the waters came down with a leap and a roar to be lost in the clasp of the Calder), and bracing herself to the strain on mind and limbs, plodding on through alternate gloom and shade, till the toll-gate of the high North Bridge barred the way, and, thinking of the overturned coach that brought George Mellor to be tended by her, she descended the steep hill and the oil-lighted streets of Halifax to encounter black looks and hard words from her strict mistress at the 'Crispin,' after her thankless eighteen miles' walk to Huddersfield and back. Little would the true-hearted, rough servant-lass have cared for cross looks or words, if her professing sweetheart had received her kindly. As it was, she bore them like a stoic, keeping her heartache to herself, and, taking comfort in some sort from the old adage, 'What caun't be cured, mun be endured,' scrubbed off her first keen anguish on pots and pans.

Wat Hartland, still smarting under the advice to be 'patient' which wound up a disappointing and aggravating letter, reached Longroyd Bridge just as John Wood's men and women had struck work, and were turning out with their striped and blue woollen aprons rolled round their waists, and a clatter of voices almost as loud as the clatter of clogs worn by the tenters and fullers.

George Mellor had turned out with the rest, but apparently only to exchange a few private words with one or two of the men, for he had on neither hat nor coat; and stood in conversation with them by the water side, aloof from their fellows, his black locks blowing about in the breezy air.

As the tailor came upon them unawares, Mellor started, and for a moment drew back.

'Hegh, Hartland! is it thee? What brings thee here so late, an' not market day?'

'Well, a letter I'se had from nigh Nottingham.'

'Hegh! Nottingham, did thou say?' cried Mellor, all attention on the instant.

'Ay, from my wife's relations. I want to see what thou thinks on it.'

'Half-past ten,' said Mellor, nodding to his companions; and, as if at a sign, they withdrew.

'Come into th' shop with me, and I'll get a light.' So saying, he led the way through the yard into the cropping

shop, where the oil lamps had just been extinguished, and the reek of train oil from the smouldering wicks made the atmosphere rank and oppressive to the tailor fresh from the open moors, to say nothing of the superadded odour of greasy cloth. There he was left for a few minutes, when Mellor came back with a candle in his hand.

'This place is stifling,' cried Hartland. 'How can yo endure the smell of all them lamps?'

'Ask thy own bairns how they bear th' smell. Th' factories are lit wi' tin lamps hung on th' walls just the same. It's nowt when you are used to it. But now for the letter. My time's precious; I've somewhere to go after supper. I have already lost half an hour an' more over one who had much better have stayed away,' he said impatiently.

Much better, if he referred to Susan, who had come brimful of affection and good will, only to go back overladen with heartache and disappointment. Better too had it been for Hartland if he had stayed away, or taken the hint and gone back, his fatal errand undone.

The letter was produced, and George Mellor proceeded to spell it over in silence.

'Nay, read it out, mon; I've only heard it once, an' I'd as lief knaw it by heart.'

Thus adjured, the strange young man — whose strong magnetic will had drawn Hartland to seek counsel from him, forgetful of their different years or old repugnance—began to read aloud, at first slowly, but, as he mastered the written characters, with a force and power David had not shown.

The accident which had laid him on his back for weeks at the 'Crispin' had done him a service in one respect. It had given him leisure to repair his neglected education, and old John Baines had provided the means in books and pamphlets, if not of the most healthy kind. Not that he was wholly disinterested. Oh no! He had found a fitting tool, and just sharpened it to work with; that was all.

Mellor made comments as he read, his brows closely knitted the while.

'So you thought of taking up your travels again?'

'Ay; tailoring's so bad hereabouts, I thowt I might pick oop a few pounds if I went ower th' owd ground.'

'Humph! Masters are too grand, an' workin' folk too poor

to hire a tailor. I see! Ah!' and now the veins in his forehead swelled up like a dark cord. 'So machinery is in the field against *you*, my friend, *now*. You'll believe what I have said all along, now it touches you! Pantaloons knitted by machines! Why, they'll clothe a man from top to toe with them knitting frames afore theyn done. An' then where'll the tailors be?'

Hartland ground his teeth and set his lips close. His hands clenched as they hung down beside him, and a cold perspiration stood out upon his brow. He pictured his own wife and children dropping down famished by the wayside in some future day, as the poor stocking-knitters were doing.

'Ah! Joe Wrigley! Then you know him?'

'Ay; I used to wark for his tight-fisted owd faither. But he's not one o' my soart. Dun yo know him?'

'I have seen him.'

A grim ghost of a smile flickered for a moment on the lips of the reader as he resumed, asking no technical questions. Such details might not concern him.

'Ay,' cried he then, 'hurrah for Ned Ludd! That hammer of his will break the fetters of the working man. It has rung through Leicester. It will ring through England afore th' tyrant masters wake from their dream. "A rumpus"?—ay, an' more than that. General Ludd's army is on the march, and the accursed machinery is doomed! What's this?—"yo mun have *patience*"—patience? A man whose trade is taken out of his fingers, and those of the son he has brought up to it, who can only look forward to starve with the ruck? *Patience?* It makes my blood boil to read it!'

'It set me all on fire an' a tremble till I couldna hold my neeld,[1] for th' wife took up th' words as if it wur gospel, an' turned away wi' a face as meek an' resigned as if patience would fill our mouths an' our pockets in th' long-run. Our Robby mun go to th' mill wi' his sisters now, theere's no help fur it. I wouldno mind if I could sell the old house an' bit o' ground, an' tak' a place nigher th' town. It's roughish ower th' moor i' th' dark o' neight an' morn fur young feet; an' two mile or moore's a lang pull, even fur th' lasses, to say nowt o' rain an' wind an' snow; an' never a warm bit or a sup in theer mouths from morn to neight. My heart aches as I think on it.

[1] Neeld—needle.

An' thou knows if it hadno been for 'Siah Longmore an' John Booth, Lyd an' Mary had boath been lost i' th' snowdrifts last year.'

The conversation was drifting. Mellor brought it back. 'And so you want to sell yor house. Cannot yo find a customer?'

'Oh, ay. I found a buyer as would ha' gien me seventy pound fur it. Brook th' farmer in th' Out Lane. An' I'd takken hauf a crown as God's penny.[1] But theere, th' Earl's steward went to th' farmer an' said I couldna sell the freehold. My gronfaither's gronfaither built th' house, an' broke up th' lond nigh two hundred year ago; an' nobbody's asked fur a penny o' rent, an' now th' agent says that me, or my son, or my son's son, may hold th' place an' be undisturbed, but if I let or sell it, or leave it, the Earl will take possession o' th' land an' a' upon it; an' all because I'se no pappers to show.'

'Theere's tyranny again! Why, man, the Earl couldna take it from thee in a court of law if thy family had but held it hauf that time, but I reckon thou's no money to go to law, an' if thou did, theere's one law fur th' rich an' one for th' poor! But General Ludd means to set all that reight.'

'I'd be glad if things wur set reight. Theyn been gooin' wrang wi' me for many a day.'

'Are you willing to help to reight them?' The question was put quickly and keenly, the speaker stopping as he thrust one arm into his coat sleeve, waiting for a reply.

'I'd do owt as was fair an' honest,' answered Hartland, not seeing his drift.

'Then give me your hand upon it, and come along with me. I'm bound your way, an' am late. I can go without supper fur once.'

So frankly was Mellor's hand extended to meet the other's palm, that Hartland, excited beyond his wont, joined hands involuntarily, and was met with such an iron grip that for a moment he wondered what it all meant, and to what he had pledged himself.

'We must step out,' said Mellor, as they crossed the bridge,

[1] God's penny—a small sum given and taken as a token that a bargain or purchase is concluded (comp. French, *Dénier à Dieu*). It is equivalent to the transfer of a shoe amongst the ancient Jews, or of a straw amongst the early English.

'or we shall be behind time, but if I have gained a brother the time will not be lost.'

All this was enigmatical to Walter Hartland, who wondered whither his companion was bound at that hour, not noting the little 'we' that coupled their destination together.

There was a bright March moon to light their steps, but Mellor seemed to keep within the shadow of trees or houses wherever practicable, as if to escape the observation of the few people not at home or in bed. And, the Huddersfieldians not having as yet awakened to the necessity for lighting the public thoroughfares, this was not difficult.

But rarely did Mellor let the conversation flag; he kept up the sense of injury and oppression in Hartland's breast, and had he been less bewildered and excited, he might have noted how the bold and strident tones of his companion had become sharp and incisive, but subdued as if to mock the echoes.

As they turned sharply from New Street to cross King Street, they encountered a man who almost ran against them, and the light of the moon shining full in their faces, a voice greeted them with—

'Hegh, Hartland! who'd ha' thowt o' seein' thee at this time o' neet!'

'It's as late fur thee, Sowden, as fur me,' was Hartland's ready answer.

'Ay, but I'm bahn hoam.'

'An' I'm bahn hoam. Good-neet.'

'Good-neet.'

And on went Hartland to overtake his companion, who had neither spoken nor slackened his speed, and was then rounding the corner of Church Street.

Sowden turned, looked after them, and seemed inclined to follow, but he hesitated, between curiosity and the fear of a sharp tongue at home.

He had been to the Public Dispensary, newly established in one corner of the 'Packhorse' yard, a mere room up a flight of steps; and he was returning with medicine for a sick child.

Curiosity got the better of his fears.

'What the dickens brings Hartland wi' George Mellor? An' wheere con they be gooin' at this hour o' neet? If I hadno been fatchin th' 'pothecary's stuff I'd a been i' bed.'

Muttering thus to himself, he tracked them across the Kirk-

gate and through the silent Beast-market, until they entered the North road, which about a mile away forked off to Halifax and Bradford. He then judged it expedient to turn back, which he did at double-quick speed, communing with himself as was his wont.

'I'se say nowt, but theere's summat queer afoot. Yon's Hartland's road hoam reight enough, but what brings George Mellor wi' him? An' I saw Thorpe an' Hey gooin' one after t'other through the Beast-market about twenty minutes sin'. I'se wide awake if I say nowt, an' I mean to get to th' bottom o' Maister George's manoovers afore lang. But he's noan th' chap for peaceable folk to meddle wi'. Now Wat Hartland's a good soart o' mon, ready to help onybody at a pinch, an' as kind to th' birds an' beastes as if they wur childer; an' 'Siah Longmore says as theere's nowt bud love an' peace i' theer house. I wish ev'ry mon could say as much.'

And here he sighed heavily. There was little peace on his hearth. The contrast struck him mournfully. He became doubtful whether his excuse for lost time would pass muster with his sharp-witted wife. Then his thoughts went back to the lost track.

'I'd be sorry if that limb o' Satan got Hartland into his clutches wi' his schemin' an' plottin', as he thinks a saicret. Yet it looks awful like it. An' I con do nowt to stop it as I knaw on. Theere wur that baby-faced lad Booth, a simple, soft-hearted chap wi' all his larnin', till yon fiery demon got round him. An' now hear him, wi' his reights o' men, an' his sufferin' brothers. I'd gie Hartland a hint if I daured. But I'se best say nowt till I'se sure, and then— Hegh! theere's Nance i' th' doorway looikin' out. I'se ha' to say as th' 'pothecary kept me waitin'.'

CHAPTER III.

THE LUDDITE OATH.

HAD Joseph Sowden, undeterred by dread of his own wife, followed the two men who had excited his curiosity within sight of the branching roads, he might have noted that neither the one nor the other was bound for Bradford, but kept to the left along the narrow highway cut through Grimescar Wood (the western boundary of Fixby Park), as if following in the track of poor faithful and devoted Susan.

Yet the two Sowden had suspiciously followed were bound neither to Halifax nor Elland, nor was luckless Susan in either of their thoughts.

One had a belief he was on his direct way home. But at the last moment, instead of proceeding some third of a mile farther, and turning off obliquely to the Out Lane on the left, Hartland, overpowered by the forcible and specious arguments of his determined companion, a man scarcely two-thirds his age, allowed himself to be led over a broken-topped stone wall on the right hand, and across the corner of a rising pasture into the thickly-planted hillside Grimescar Woods, treading down the springing scurvy-grass and the breeze-blown anemones at every step under the budding elders and palm-willows, as Mellor strode onwards in silence, until they reached a darksome clump of Scotch firs, where the very moonbeams seemed to have lost their way, and the thick carpet of dry fir-cones and matted brown needles underfoot gave never an echo to the tread.

Here a dark figure came forward to meet them; a single word was exchanged; they were allowed to pass on, and then Hartland was conscious that each tree trunk was preternaturally thickened by the bulk of a human being.

'We have waited long,' said one.

'Ay,' returned Mellor; 'but I have brought another brother, and so have wasted no time.'

A low, many-voiced murmur, that was scarcely the sighing of the wind through the firs, sounded as a note of approval.

Hartland, not prepared to be thus handed over as a 'brother' to he knew not whom, or committed to he knew not what, began to feel uneasy, not to say alarmed. He would fain have protested and withdrawn.

'Nay, nay, I never meant'—he began, to be silenced by the grasp of Mellor on his arm, and the emphatic whisper, 'You gave me your hand upon it. Think of your wife an' bairns, man. There can be no drawing back *now!*'

'Hegh! but thou knaws'— The remonstrance was cut short. The dusky shadows dissevered from the tree boles seemed to close round, and more than one voice he recognised said—

'Welcome to the new brother! Has he taken the oath?'

'Not yet. He will presently,' George Mellor answered for him, and then proceeded to address them all, in vigorous language, and a strong vernacular that carried conviction with it more surely than any studied rhetoric of the schools, on the wrongs inflicted on their fellow-men by heartless tyrants who disregarded the claim to earn their bread by the sweat of their brow, and, under fictitious pretences, set up iron demons to do the work of men and put the wages saved in the masters' pockets, driving famishing women and children into the poorhouse or the grave, and the men to the shambles of war.

'And let none of you,' he went on, 'think your own trade or your own wark sure. Our new brother here has larned the folly o' that. He has had a letter that has driven him desperate, and will tell you better than words of mine what each and all have a right to expect. We have banded together to strike a blow fur others; we know not how sooin it may be fur ourselves. Show a light.'

Whatever might be Mellor's own motives, he certainly stirred up each man in the vital part of *self.* He knew that to keep enthusiasm alive where the signs of suffering were not painfully present around, he must show the danger threatening every man's own hearth or interest; and something of this he must have *felt*, or no desire for power or notoriety could have made him a mover and ruler of men.

Hartland had been carried away by his fiery eloquence, and, notwithstanding the prohibitory clause in the letter, interposed no hand when it was held to be read in the light from a dark lantern. Not the bull's-eye of the modern policeman, but a small article of japanned tin, having a plain glass front with a sliding cover to be opened or shut at will, and a handle that could be flattened against the back; a thing with narrow sides to be hid under a buttoned coat or in a pocket.

The flame within was burning down, when one of the group trimmed the wick, and so revealed the hard face of William Thorpe ere he turned the light athwart the letter whilst their leader read it out.

Slowly, deliberately, it was read, and emphasised to touch the listening group around, but Hartland noted gratefully that never a *name* was given throughout, only initials.

Groans and execrations accompanied the reading of the letter, which stirred afresh the indignation and distress of Hartland, as the contrast between the plenty under Robin's roof and the new scarcity under his own were held before him, together with the threatened extinction by mechanism of half the trade on which even a pittance depended.

'What say you, my brothers? Is not that sufficient to make honest workers desperate, and to justify our aims? Who shall say after that his own calling is secure from the mechanical fiends?'

'Ay! ay!' and 'None! none!' had answered the speaker, along with curses not less vehement because they were muttered between set teeth.

'And now the book,' said Mellor, in the same inflexible note of command observable throughout.

It was a weird, solemn, and mysterious scene, calculated to impress a man of more stolid temperament than Hartland, who seemed to have lost all control over his own will.

He saw a Bible in Mellor's hand however it got there,

and was conscious they were both hemmed in by a shadowy ring of men with darkened faces, men not to be trifled with. He felt his own hand within the grasp of Mellor, and the sacred book between them in the other.

It was an awful and trying moment. He was strung up to a pitch of excitement. He saw there was no retreat, and hoped he was doing right, although conscience whispered that he was doing wrong. He was powerless to resist; answering and responding like one in a dream, as the fearful and monstrous oath of the Luddites was administered.

'What is thy name?'

'Walter Hartland.'

'Art thou willing to become a member of our fraternity, and submit without hesitation or question to the commands of General Ludd?'

Now was Hartland's moment to escape! It passed. As the fascinated humming-bird drops into the open jaws of the serpent, so, with never a 'God help me!' he answered, 'I am.'

'Then say as I say: "I, Walter Hartland, of my own voluntary will, do declare and solemnly swear that I never will reveal to any person or persons under the canopy of heaven the names of the persons who comprise this secret committee, their proceedings, meetings, places of abode, dress, features, complexion, or anything else that might lead to a discovery of the same, either by word, deed, or sign, under the penalty of being sent out of the world by the first brother who shall meet me, and my name and my character blotted out of existence, and never to be remembered but with contempt and abhorrence. And I further do swear that I will use my best endeavours to punish by death any traitor or traitors, should any rise up among us, wherever I can find him or them, and though he should fly to the verge of nature I will pursue him with unceasing vengeance. So help me God, and bless me, to keep this my oath inviolate!"'

Hartland had ever had a hearty, cheery voice in the old time. In following the sonorous utterance of Mellor that night it was unnaturally hollow, broken, and constrained.

He had hardly gone into this of his own free will, had no preconception of the tenor of the oath demanded, and as gradually one malignant clause followed another, his soul shrank within him.

He had not reached that pitch of desperation in which a man is utterly reckless and abandoned; and he shuddered at the blasphemous call on God to bless the iniquitous oath he had so impotently uttered 'before heaven.'

He stood there as one paralysed when it was over. No six consecutive words could he recall, although the substance of the oath seemed burnt into his brain; and he who had taught the wild birds to come and feed from his hands or lips was a pledged murderer at the bidding of a General unknown.

He had crossed the boundary wall; had entered Grimescar Wood a free man, with soul unstained by evil act or deed that was not common to fallible humanity; he would leave it fettered in body and soul, sunk into a pit of iniquity from which there was no release.

One by one the Luddites there saluted him as 'brother,' and exchanged a secret grip into which he was first initiated; a password was given; a fresh meeting-place was appointed; he heard a conference about arms and subscriptions, and communication with other bands elsewhere: but all the while his own mind was in a tumult, and 'What would Marian think or say if she knew?' was the one thought and question repeating and repeating itself with the pertinacity of insanity.

How the meeting dissolved he was scarcely conscious. The shadows seemed to melt and disappear in the gloom. Some one took him by the arm and led him away over the broken wall and left him in the high-road; but how he found his way to the toll-bar, and stumbled up through the rugged lane and past Longmore's cottage, where all was dark and still, and on over the broken ground to his own gateway, where Marian was standing out in the cold looking for him, he never could recall.

He could only remember her frightened face, and her anxious questioning if he was ill, he looked so haggard, and felt so feverish, and reeled as if he was drunk. But *that* she knew he could not be; he was a temperate man, and she could not wrong him by such a suggestion.

All this he heard, and her trembling desire to know what had befallen him, he looked so strange; but he could only reject the porridge she had kept warm, and beg her to leave him alone, and let him go to bed in quiet.

For the first time in their wedded life his lips were sealed, and he had a secret—a dread secret—she might not share.

There was little sleep that night for either.

He could not pray. If he could only have put up a prayer to his God for blessing and deliverance, he might have found peace and slept. But no! The words rising impulsively and habitually to his lips were checked by the swift remembrance that his last prayer to God had been for a blessing on *murder.* He could have cried out in his agony, but that relief also was denied him, and his efforts to suppress a cry or a groan, lest he should alarm his dearly loved and devoted wife, made the long night intolerable.

She had long been in a declining state of health, though she made no complaint; and Dr. Hebblethwaite, had he been consulted, could scarcely have given her malady a name. In these days a doctor would have talked of nervous symptoms; but *then* to be *nervous* meant to be strong, vigorous, energetic. And even now, who looks for shattered nerves among the porridge-eating dwellers on a moorside? But Marian had brought tea-drinking habits with her from her Nottinghamshire home, and her nerves *had* been shattered by successive shocks, —the catastrophe of the storm; the calamitous news of her father's death; the return home of her husband wounded and pillaged; the fright on the night of the great snowfall, when after eleven o'clock Josiah and John Booth brought home her girls benumbed and wet, after more than one narrow escape from drifts and a lost road, and when her husband and David, gone with a lantern in search, were themselves not back before midnight.

No wonder she was subject to nervous fears and tremors if one or other overstayed due time, or that she waited at the gate for Walter in a state of agitation, not lessened by his wretched and strange aspect.

More than one thing had tried her that day. The disheartening letter from Sherwood; the contrast between the plenty there and the bareness of her own home, whence the store of hanging bacon and beef had alike disappeared, and where the meal kist was almost empty; Walter's abrupt and perplexing departure, leaving work unfinished; the return at night of Mary with her arms and shoulders all red and blue

wheals from the stick of the irate slubber; and her fresh fears for her husband.

Nevertheless she was asleep the first. Her own soul was clear, and she had had a drop of blessed balm in her cup for which Benjy was to be thanked.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DAY AFTER.

THE morning sun did not warm the front of Hartland's habitation, so no Auroran fingers touched sleeping eyelids to unclose them. Habit and the Dutch clock indeed called the sleepers to their daily tasks before the lazy sun showed his red face in the winter months. Certainly only something extraordinary kept any of them out of bed after the clock struck nine at night, and four o'clock rarely found them there whether it was dark or dawn.

Of late Marian had seemed to crave longer rest, and seldom rose until the fire, kept alight with a gathering peat or flaight, was burning fairly and the porridge-pot bubbling above it; but she was always up to give Lydia and Mary the oatcake and cheese, or whatever else had to serve them as food until night.

On that second of March she overslept herself. When she arose, the kitchen was swept, the porridge made and waiting, the two girls gone, the lads dressed, and David at work by such daylight as there was—daylight which scarcely reached the bed in the nook behind the thick tall screen of the lang-settle, where garments might be slipped on or off unseen.

The clock was on the stroke of seven; and Walter himself was, or seemed to be, still sleeping heavily.

'Davy, yow shouldna hae let me owerlie so late,' his mother said, as she came forth, seeing the unused porringers

set in a row on the table. 'Didn yowr sisters goo wie'out breakfast?'

'No, mother, they're a' reight, an' the porridge is ready. But I couldnt find in my heart to wake you when I knew you went to bed on th' wrong side o' midnight, or faither oather.'

'Then yo warr awake too, lad?'

'Ay. Do yo think I could ha' slept when I heard yo up, an' creeping in an' out to th' gate to watch for him? Nay, mother; I was putting my things on to go looik what had happened when I heard him come hoam. But was theere nowt wrong wi' faither? I hardly knew his step on th' ground. An' I heard yo ask if he was ill.'

She shook her head, and held up a finger for silence. She had heard a sigh and a stir in the bed behind the screen.

'I think he warr tired, Davy. You know he went out without supper. Call in the lads to breakfast while I wesh my face.'

As she went into the little back kitchen, a tall head and shoulders appeared above the oaken screen.

Davy was swinging himself off the board to summon the younger ones, sent out in order to keep the house quiet. The sight of his father's countenance made him start.

'Hegh! but thou does look ill, faither. Something's wrang wi' thee.'

The distress on the son's face had its effect. Hartland pulled himself together. There had hitherto been no concealments in the family; he was conscious some explanation was expected.

'Well, lad, that letter put me out yesterday. It set my head on fire. But it's nowt moore nor a dip in th' beck will put reight;' and out he went to souse his hot head well in the cool water of the tumbling rivulet.

Marian had heard what passed, but she was far from satisfied. Davy's suggestion that his father had gone to read her brother's letter to George Mellor had taken possession of her, and she felt that to him was attributable much of the sudden change and reticence of her ever frank and outspoken husband.

Only once had she come into personal contact with George

Mellor since he was a boy, but with her first impressions were lasting. His name ever recalled a dog-fight and a brutal attack on an old man in the stocks. And she could not forget her own husband's oft-expressed repugnance to the growing youth and man. She had herself an instinctive dread of the fiery-eyed cropper, and it was not without alarm she became aware of Walter's growing intimacy with him.

Betty Longmore had helped to keep her early impressions alive.

The weaver and his wife, following in the wake of Josiah, found their way on Sunday afternoons to Side-o'-Beck, when the weather was fine, partly to hear the Scriptures read, and partly for a gossip. And while Thomas sat on the bench outside—once sacred to the beehives—to smoke a pipe with Wat and talk of trade and politics, Betty over a cup of tea within would pour out into her neighbour's ears a stream of domestic grievances.

Not the least of these lamentations concerned Josiah's elder brothers, one of whom, Jack, had married a lass they did not like, and left the parent roof, an example the other threatened to follow. But her trouble lay deeper than his marriage. Jack, the married son, was a journeyman wool-comber, Bill a cropper working at Mr. Fisher's. And the gist of Betty's lament was the change in their habits and characters of late years.

'Theere wor nowt to be said agen th' lads till George Mellor came back to Huddersfeldt, an' nah they're never reight unless they're i' Wood's, or in th' "Woolpack" tap; an' they dunnot coom hoam till folk are abed, an' once or twice they hev been out a' neet, an' they swear like troopers. An' it's a' George Mellor's doing.'

There were variations in the special instances, but the theme was ever the same. Betty's two sons were becoming lazy, morose, and discontented, and George Mellor's evil influence lay at the root of all. She might not generalise thus, her complaints were anecdotal, but such was the summing up in the mind of Mrs. Hartland.

Betty had relieved her overcharged maternal heart so naturally and truthfully, that John Booth's zealous eulogiums of his 'noble-hearted friend,' so far from biassing Marian in Mellor's favour, had turned the tables upon himself.

She had been quick to observe the coldness creeping in between Booth and Josiah, and put her own interpretation upon it. That Josiah shared his mother's dislike to George Mellor she was well aware; indeed, she had on one occasion overheard him say to Booth, 'I wish, John, you would break with Mellor before he leads you to destruction.'

All this recurred to her mind as she watched her husband through that day, expecting to hear what had detained him the night before; and she coupled his silence and reticence with Mrs. Longmore's account of the change that had come over her sons.

At another time he would have voluntarily commended the steadiness with which Davy had stuck at his work, in order that the boy's suit might be completed and taken home; but he merely assented with an 'Ay, ay; he's a good lad,' when she spoke of it.

And when, with more than maternal pride, she produced a thick shaggy rug or woollen door-mat Benjy had created out of waste thrums, knitted into a foundation with heald-threads, and another made of heald-threads only, so as to resemble a patch of close rough grass bleached in the sun, there was none of the exultation she anticipated.

'Bless the bairn! he's cleverer than I thowt,' he said, but a heavy sigh followed the words, and not a ray of gladness lit up his features.

'Dostno see, Wat, as Benjy may arn his own livin' now he con knit mats like thisn? Rich folk'll be rare an' glad on them to put at their parlour doors,' Marian urged.

'Arn his living? Ay, till a machine's made to tak' it out on his fingers,' he answered gloomily. Then, observing the disappointment in her face, he added with another sigh, 'But theere's no need to discourage Benjy. Maybe he con mak' summat out on it i' time.'

And again he turned with clouded brow to his own occupation, but Marian and Davy both noted how at times his hands dropped idly down and he seemed lost in reverie, only to recover with a start and resume his stitching hurriedly.

The clothes were made and pressed.

'Shall I take them home, faither?' asked Davy. 'Yo dunnot seem well.'

The observation might have irritated the man. 'No, I'll

tak' them mysen!' he cried sharply; adding in another tone, 'Nowt ails me, lad. Happen they'd not pay thee.'

It was almost a relief to Marian when he left the house, so great a constraint had Wat's manner laid on all. Even the children felt it, especially Benjy, who had anticipated a pat on the head and an echo of the well-pleased, proud, encouraging words his mother had spoken when first he showed his novel handiwork to her.

She did her best by reporting all his father had said of his cleverness, and the prospect of a living to be made out of his discovery, and if she added a few rosy words of her own, and kept back the thorns, who could blame her?

Benjy smiled, and said he would work hard and let his father see what he could do, and she was content. But it was not all the same to the lad.

He had stood outside the door when his work, praised and admired by Davy and his sisters, as well as his mother, had been exhibited to the head of the family, and if he had not caught all the drift of his father's allusion to a problematic machine, the desponding and slighting tones had reached him.

From birth he had been his father's pet and darling, doubly so in his crippled years. There had been so much excitement shown when he had mastered the alphabet, or could join syllables together, or write a copy, or work a simple sum on his slate, or could even knit a garter, that now he had contrived something new 'all out of his own head,' something likely to convert him at once from a helpless charge into a profitable worker like the others, he naturally expected his father to be foremost in his commendations. Indeed, so keenly is the difference felt between the consuming mouth and producing hands in the working man's family, that on Benjy, who, after long brooding over his own burdensomeness, had compassed a probable livelihood, the father's want of appreciation fell like a weight of lead.

He waited patiently all the morning, knitting up his thrums as if his very life depended on his industry, thinking to himself, 'Faither'll say summat abaght my wark sooin;' but as the morning lapsed into noon, and after a pretence of a dinner, his father set off out with the freshly completed suit in a bundle under his arm, the disappointed and discouraged lad crept up

to Davy with something like tears shining in his eyes, and whispered—

'Hegh, Davy! I'm feared faither thinks nowt o' my mat. He has no takken a bit o' notice on it to me.'

'Oh, never mind, Benjy lad,' cried his brother reassuringly. 'Faither's oather ill or in some trouble. He'd a letter as put him abaght yesterday. Mappen he will notice thy mat in the morn. But dunnot yo fret. He said it was clever. An' I'm sure thy wark will sell. We'll ask Josiah.'

'Ay, so we will. He's sure to knaw. But I wish faither had said summat moore.'

The hunchbacked boy had brightened for a moment at the suggestion of Josiah as an umpire, but he could not forget his one parent's indifference, and though he still plied his needles industriously, keeping his thrums in a heap in a corner of the settle near which he sat on a low stool, it was with less spirit.

Davy meanwhile, like the good son he was, having finished his work on the board, cleared away rags and all other concomitants of his trade. Then he took mop and pail out of his mother's hand, and bade her 'Lie down on the settle and take a bit o' rest. I'll redd-up[1] the house fur you in a jiffy.' It was not the first time by many that he had done so when by chance his own tailoring was over early, unless he took a turn in the garth digging or planting. Weeding mostly fell to the little ones, and Robby was so occupied even then, with the help or hindrance of five-year-old Silas.

More than a century of good tillage had brought the land into a fairly good condition, but the situation was too bleak, and the nature of the soil such as to prohibit the cultivation of indiscriminate crops. Turnips, colewort, and oats throve best. Cabbages, potatoes, and beans were grown, but could not be said to flourish; and since cash had been scant, the crops had suffered like human beings for lack of nourishment.

Home came Lydia and Mary, the latter in a fume. Her wages had been docked for carelessness and inattention, as if payment by the stick was all her work was worth. And with her reduced wages a hint was given that unless she was more obedient, she would have to find employment elsewhere. She had not gone to work in the best frame of mind that morning,

[1] Redd-up—set straight, clean, make ready.

and the slubber had made her feel the weight of his stick again.

She had protested against his ill-usage all the way home, and, heedless of Lydia's remonstrance against troubling her mother with complaints, burst into the house, declaring that she would 'never go to the mill again to be beaten black and blue.'

'Th' mon's a brute, Mary,' said the mother, with tears in her eyes, as she looked at the shoulders bared for her inspection, and prepared to bathe them; 'but mappen yow warr lakin' an' put th' slubber out. Yow know he'd lose his wage if th' stopping o' the billy made his count o' coppins run short at th' week end. An' he's mappen a lot o' mouths to fill.'

'Ay, he has, mother,' put in Lydia; 'an' he's no warse than t'other slubbers. They needn't hit so hard, though to be sure men have short tempers, an' th' pieceners are plagues.'

'Well, I mean to goa to sarvice, mother, and 'Siah Longmore has promised to get me a place if he con. I'd rayther nurse babbies or scrub floors, than be a slave to a brute of a slubber.'

'It will be far the best fur her, mother,' added Lydia. 'The pieceners are a sad lot; Mary would be best away from them, under the control of a good mistress.'

'Mappen yo're reet,' assented Marian; 'but say nowt to-neet, lasses; summat has upset your faither, an' yow mun say nowt to put him out further.'

She had only given her warning in time. Barely had they washed their faces, and sat down to their porridge supper, than their father walked in, followed by Davy, whom he had found at Longmore's.

He had brought home a bag of meal, a lump of bacon, some tea and sugar for his wife, and a bundle of waste thrums and twine for Benjy, at the sight of which the boy clapped his hands, rejoicing, though they meant work, not play. They meant also his father's approbation of his work.

He had brought home, too, a more cheerful face than he had taken out with him, and work for the following week, David bearing a portion of his load.

When he left home that afternoon, he had resolved to keep clear of George Mellor or any of his followers, and had done so. He had made up his mind to have no more to do with

them than he could help, and if he could not free himself from his oath, to run into no mischief he could avoid.

But the consciousness of that fearful oath hanging over him, pierced and stung with sudden thrusts at unexpected moments, and poisoned his domestic peace.

CHAPTER V.

BRUISED SHOULDERS.

THE dress of working women in the West Riding at that period, and for several years later, was a plain, narrow-skirted, short-sleeved gown of linsey wolsey, or of printed calico, with a coloured cotton neckerchief, that crossed over the bust, and tied at the back of the short waist. Some old field-workers and hawkers wore men's topcoats over their gowns, and men's felt hats into the bargain. Young girls of *all* ranks wore frocks short in the sleeve and low in the bodice ; the pinafore, a plain, unornamental, closely-fitting piece of diaper, holland, or coarse wrapper (in that case it was called a brat) just shaped and sewn together to fit the shoulders, being the only cover or protection for the neck, or for the dress beneath.

Lydia had been promoted to the womanly kerchief and apron a year or more, but Mary, notwithstanding her rapid growth, still retained the young girl's frock and brat ; on the Sunday exchanging her coarse wrapper (now called 'harden') for one of blue and white chequered linen.

She had but the one. It had been well washed, and worn so long, that, like her stuff frock, it was scant for the wearer. The strings tying it at the neck and waist behind did not bring the sides together for three or four inches, and the shallow shoulder-pieces left her neck barer than need have been, had she not grown, or new pinafores been accessible.

She wore the wrapper brat during the early morning, when Lydia and herself bustled about to light the fire, dress the little ones, prepare breakfast, clear away, wash vegetables, and set on the big pot to cook slowly for dinner whilst they were all at church. This was their wont on a Sunday morning to save their ailing mother, who was thus allowed a longer rest. And that Sunday, it so happened that Walter, over-wearied, and in a better frame of mind, overslept himself, and was hurried to be in time. Consequently nothing was seen of Mary's discoloured shoulders.

But no sooner was Mary's cloak laid aside, and the tidy pinafore assumed for the day, than Walter, sitting down to their homely repast of bacon and greens, caught sight of the blue wheals on her bare arms and shoulders.

He started from his seat all in a quiver.

'What's that? Who did that to thee?' he cried in a voice half choked with emotion. He dearly loved his children, and would have endured any pain to save them.

'Hurst, the slubber,' answered Mary, not sorry, if the truth were known, to have an opportunity for telling.

'Curse the brute!' he exclaimed. 'I'll break every bone in his rascally skin!' Then, as if conscious there must have been some provocation, he asked impatiently, 'What was it fur? What had thou been doing?'

'Nowt but lakin' a bit.'

Here Lydia interposed, afraid lest her father's visible passion should lead him into some trouble. 'Ay, but lakin' lets the slubbins run out, an' mak's him have to stop the machine to'—

'Hang the machines, an' them as use them! Are young lasses to be treated like brute beasts? Had th' lass been spinning at hoam wi' thee an' thy mother, shu'd ne'er ha' shown shouthers a' blue welts.' Then in an undertone he muttered to himself, 'If that comes o' machinery, George Mellor's reight; it's best made away wi'.'

He hardly heard Marian, who observed, 'Mappen shu tried th' slubber o'ermuch wi' her lakin'; an' men hanno th' patience o' women. But thy dinner's gooin' cold, Wat.'

He caught the last words, and sat down, but the harmony of the meal was disturbed. There was an undercurrent of thought in the father's mind, apparent in the neglected 'grace,' and the

moody silence in which he filled their platters, and thrust back his chair when all was done.

Marian had caught something of his muttering, and her trouble was renewed.

From the grandfather's days it had been the practice at Side-o'-Beck to have the big family Bible brought out on the Sabbath afternoons and read aloud for the general benefit. The old man himself had read and expounded the text in his rugged and homely way, as his father had done before him, and this continued until his son Walter married, and the duty was transferred to him.

Then the pride of the parents made David a deputy; and of late Josiah had been honoured with an occasional invitation to 'read the chapter to-day.'

But Marian had for some time noticed that John Booth either was fidgety during the reading, or walked into the garden when the Bible was brought forth, or he delayed his coming until the reading was over, or loitered outside the garth, and once she saw him through the open door beckoning for Lydia to join him there, and that had not pleased her.

That afternoon Walter strode out into the garth, straight from the dinner-table; not as of old to smoke a pipe, or gambol with his little ones out on the moor beyond. The pipe he had long set aside as a luxury he could dispense with when necessaries were hard to obtain, and he seemed that afternoon as if he could well have dispensed with the presence of Benjy, Robby, and Silas, so little heed did he give to their playful attempts to draw him out.

Presently up the hill came Josiah, his fresh face glowing with animation, that spoke of something pleasanter than breasting the March wind.

He shook hands with Walter Hartland, exchanged a few words with him, patted the head of leaping and bounding Curly, then, holding Benjy by one hand and Silas by the other, came up the path with Robby and Curly frisking behind him.

There was a stoppage to speak to David, who was seated on the bench under the window, endeavouring to read a wonderful book of travel, whilst the breeze took liberties with the leaves, and then he walked into the orderly house, where Mrs.

Hartland, in a clean linen cap, printed gown, and a long white linen apron, was laying the Bible on the well-scrubbed table.

Both the girls were up-stairs.

'Now, Benjy, for the famous mats,' said he, after a cordial shake of the mother's hand.

'Ah, this *is* something new. They are sure to sell, Benjy. But you would have to line and stuff them, to make them firm, and keep them from rolling up. Some o' the coarse wrappering that comes round waistcoatings would do, and you might stuff them with dry heather. I daresay Mr. Wright would sell them for you in his shop, or Clegg, the candler.[1] We can ask John Booth when he comes.

Mary came down-stairs at that moment.

'Oh, Mary,' said he, 'I fancy I know of a place that would just suit you, if you're old enough.'

'Hegh, 'Siah! yo dunnot say so!' ejaculated the girl, clasping her hands together in high glee.

'Wheere is it?' asked the mother eagerly. 'An' how didn yow hear on it?'

'Why, Mr. Wainwright, o' Greenfolds Mill, nigh Liversedge, was at our place yesterday; an' while master was measuring him for a new riding-coat, he mentioned that their nursemaid had run off to get wed, and left Mrs. Wainwright all in the lurch until she could obtain a fresh lass, one they could trust. I bethought me of Mary, and as I was setting down the measurements, I put in a word for her. "What?" cried Mr. Wainwright, all astonishment. "Do you mean the daughter of Hartland, the tailor, who was robbed and half murdered on Pitts Moor about nine years ago? By all means let her come on Monday to Greenfolds to see Mrs. Wainwright.' Then he went on to say that for his own part he would be glad to have a child of an upright, respectable man like your husband in his household. So now, if Mary was in earnest, she had best not lose the chance.'

In earnest? Mary soon let him know that; and Marian thanked the young man from a full heart. It was a long-wished-for opportunity.

Out ran Mary in high glee to acquaint her father, and ask him to come in for reading.

[1] Candler—chandler.

She found him leaning over the garth wall in deep conversation with John Booth, and was sent back, with an admonition not to interrupt them, and an intimation that the reading need not be delayed on their account. Yet he called her back, and pointed out the discoloured marks on her arms and shoulders before he let her go.

As she returned up the garden path, between clustering borders of London-pride, just sprouting afresh, and showing a bright green centre in each dingy brown rosette, Marian, through the open doorway, observed Booth nodding and beckoning to some one at the up-stairs window, and immediately Lydia descended the stone stairs, with a rosy tinge on her cheeks, and would have passed into the garden, but her mother called her back, ostensibly to hear the good news.

Mary's message that they were not to wait struck the wife with a sudden chill. What had come to her husband? She could not remember such an excuse ever beforetime.

David had come in, the chapter was read as usual, but there was a general shuffling and restlessness among his hearers which betokened inattention, and no one presumed to supply the customary commentary in the father's absence.

It was with a little sigh the mother noted how ready her young people were to rise and disperse when David closed the sacred volume; even he went outside with more than ordinary haste, and waited there, pattering his feet on the stones as if impatient for Josiah to join him.

Marian caught Josiah by the sleeve and detained him.

'Look yow, 'Siah,' said she, drawing him out of earshot; 'what sort on a chap is this Booth, that he caun't bide to hear a chapter o' Scripture read? He warn't like this when he came here first.'

Josiah shook his head and breathed heavily; he had a hard and ungracious task before him.

'Hegh, Mrs. Hartland!' said he soberly, 'nowt ailed John Booth till George Mellor and some folk in Halifax got hold of him. He was a good lad and went to church regular when I brought him here first. I'd give my head now that I had not, for he's changed, and I'm bahn to own I'm in trouble lest he should do harm to Davy or Lydia with his rambling talk about things he has not sense to understand. I know it's ungrateful

to say a word against him, for he has a good heart, and helped me to learn things I could not have taught myself. But he's simple and misguided, and—oh, I do wish he had never come here! I would keep him away now if I could.'

'Look yow, 'Siah,' Marian cried, with impressive earnestness, still keeping her grasp upon his arm, 'if harm comes to Davy or Lyd through him, I shall lay it at yowr door, for yow browt him hither. George Mellor's companions are no fit to be either yowrs or ours. I'm sorry fur John Booth, fur I thowt him such a bonnie lad; but I mun think o' my own childer first an' foremost. And oh, I'm afeared theyn getten hold on Hartland somehow, he's so oft at that Longroyd Bridge. Thy mother says she's sure theere's some mischief hatchin' theere, an' Hartland hasna been his own sen th' last two-three days. Didn yow e'er know him keep away from th' readin' afore? But goo; Davy's waitin', an' see yow keep him an' Lyd out o' Booth's way.'

'I'll do my best,' replied Josiah, as he moved towards the door; then, returning, he added, as an afterthought—

'Mrs. Hartland, would you care much if Davy went away to seek work? Other lads do at his age. It might be best for him.'

'Davy go away?' she gasped, laying her hand upon her heart. 'Why, he's hardly seventeen yet!'

But when Josiah had left her to herself, she dwelt upon the words until she found new import in them. And she set herself as a duty to watch, and keep both Lydia and Davy apart from the wild enthusiast Booth. There was a prospect of Mary going away, and as for Benjy, he had always held aloof from the pale-faced young fellow who had so fascinated the others with his learning and his eloquence, and of whose subversive opinions she was beginning to feel alarmed. As for Marian herself, the heights and depths of learning were comprehended in the ability to read the Scriptures without spelling, and to interpret them to common understandings. John Booth might be able to do this, but he shrank from the office with distaste. Weighed in her scales, he came wofully short, with all his Latin and Greek thrown in.

Benjy and his little brothers were seated on the wooden bench outside, regaling themselves with cakes of parkin Josiah

had brought, and setting Curly to beg for his share; Lydia, with her arm round Mary, was leading her up and down the paved path, regardless of the keen March winds, and every now and then casting sidelong glances at young Booth, as if impatient of his prolonged discourse with her father; Davy and Josiah had strayed away over the moor in the direction of Dean Head. Mrs. Hartland was left to think out Josiah's suggestion undisturbed.

She set the kettle on the fire, it being her wont to treat them all but the two youngest to a cup of tea on a Sunday afternoon; and if the water overpowered the tea, or there was only treacled oatcake instead of white bread and butter, no one there was disposed to cavil. Then she took from the coffer top, which it adorned, a japanned tray, on which was a gaily painted lady with a pink parasol and a clinging white robe, having the merest apology for a bodice, taking the air along with a sportive poodle secured by the bluest of blue ribbons. On this, after careful dusting, she ranged half a dozen willow-pattern cups and saucers minus handles, and warranted not to hold too much, which she had brought with her from Nottingham, together with a sugar-bowl, a bright pewter tea-pot and cream-jug Walter had brought from Sheffield as a present to his bride, and a couple of small tin cans for the milk of Robby and Silas. There were only a couple of pewter teaspoons to do duty for them all, and the fresh oatcake was piled on a wooden trencher. But what did that matter if peace and love presided at the board?

As she moved about the house soberly, catching glimpses of those without through the window and open door, she wondered what subject of mutual interest could occupy her husband and John Booth so long; and what meant the glances the latter exchanged so frequently with Lydia, and then she turned over in her own mind all the chances of work for Davy elsewhere, out of the reach of Booth or Mellor, of whom she had an unconquerable and growing dread. Her son's father had been very little older when he went out into the world, and there was not work enough at home to employ both needles. But Davy had never yet slept a night away from Side-o'-Beck. He was her first-born. Could she bring her mind to part with *him?* 'Ay,' she answered herself, 'if it was for his good.' But was it for his good? Might

not evil come to him away from home as well as at home?

Her mind was tossed and troubled; she could scarcely settle the question with herself.

Out on the open moor, Josiah and Davy were settling the question for her.

CHAPTER VI.

A SUNDAY AT SIDE-O'-BECK.

DAVID had a remarkably limited circle of acquaintance for a young man of his age. His intimate friendships began and ended with Josiah Longmore and John Booth, or, to speak more exactly, he had no really confidential friend but Josiah. His intimacy with Booth had lasted but three or four years, and had been shared with the rest of the family, but he had known Josiah as a loving elder brother from his very cradle; they had shared the same bed, eaten from the same bowl, studied from the same book. Josiah had made his kites, threaded his cobnuts, and thrashed the big lads who cheated him at marbles. To whom but Josiah had he gone with his boyish griefs and troubles, and to whom but Josiah could he disburden his mind in these later days?

'Booth's all very well to talk to about owt or nowt, but when one's got downreight serious trouble on one's mind, one wants a plain, straightforrard, clear-headed friend to take counsel with,' he said, as helinked his arm in that of Josiah, and led him away where only the red grouse or the sharp meadow pipit, jerking its head from side to side, might be supposed to listen.

He began by telling, what Josiah already knew, that the best of his father's old customers now went to Sykes for their clothes, that there was no longer work for both of them, and that what there was came from people who never changed the fashion of their garments, and consequently he was learn-

ing nothing new to fit him to make his own way in the world.

To all this his hearer assented as to a foregone conclusion, likely to prepare the way for his own suggestions.

It was not, however, until David fully disburdened his mind of the load laid upon it by the letter from the Greenwoods, and the strangeness of his father's manner since, that Josiah felt the full force of Mrs. Hartland's apprehensions.

If David's father had taken a letter of that character to lay before George Mellor, whose opinions were known to half the town, and came back after midnight in so strange a mood, then there was reason to suppose his old master had been wrought upon to commit himself to some plot or scheme Mellor was surely hatching, and of which John Booth had unintentionally given him an inkling unawares.

Could Booth himself have had any share in working up Hartland to the condition described? He hoped not. Surely a man of his age and experience would not be led by the arguments of a beardless lad. But he remembered how fluent and persuasive Booth could be when warmed and excited by his new theories; and how resistless was the will of George Mellor, and he said to himself, 'A man like Hartland, who feels what he cannot argue out, is between them two like a piece of broadcloth between my shears.'

'Davy,' said he, 'I daresay your father is troubled at the look-out, an' your desire to seek employment elsewhere does you credit.'

David had not so expressed himself in words, and he opened his eyes as he asked, 'How did you knaw that?'

'Because it is the very thing I was about to propose to you. If you were to go away and earn a living for yourself, I am sure you would relieve your mother of a great anxiety on your account. Benjy or your mother could help your father if his trade mended, and there would be one mouth less to fill.'

'Ay, there would,' and he shook his head ruefully. 'An' do yo knaw, I get tired of looking out on our garth an' over the moor from one year's end to another. I'd like to travel as my faither did, but we have no money now to buy cloth an' things. An' then, mother would be afead of me being knocked down an' robbed. Do yo think Maister Sykes would give me journey-work?'

Promptly and decisively came the answer, 'That he would not. He turned off a man last week because trade was slack.'

This was true, but Josiah's desire to remove Davy from evil influences at hand called forth the reply. After a pause he resumed, 'I'll tell you what I would do in your place. I'd get some friend to give me a lesson or two in stylish cutting out, and with my new patterns in my bundle I'd set out over them hills,'—stretching forth his hand to the south-west,—'and take my way through Marsden to Manchester, and seek my fortune there. That's a big place, all lit up with lamps at night, and plenty of masters to work for. Mr. Sykes served his time with one Mr. Joseph Chadwick, in a street they call Cannon Street, because cannons have been stuck up as corner-posts. After that he went to a Mr. David Craig, in a fashionable place set round with trees, called St. Ann's Square. It's from him we get our new patterns.'

'Hegh! But I'd stand no chance wi' them, an' no one to speak for me.'

'Perhaps that might be managed too,' suggested Josiah meditatively. 'At all events, it's worth thinking ower. An' I'll tell thee what. I'll come up at night and chalk out on your board the new shapes and cuts, an' you may copy them for practice. Mother won't mind my staying out late to serve a neighbour.'

'Yo're a downreight good friend, 'Siah, that you are. You do put heart into a chap. I must see what mother has to say. I'm afraid she'll be against it. But there's Lyd an' Booth coming to fetch us. Mother does not like to wait tea fur one.'

They rose from the great moss and lichen covered stone on which they had been sitting, Josiah shading his eyes as if from the redly setting sun. But the early March sun is seldom overpowering, and as his right shoulder was turned towards its western couch, he may have had some other and stronger light to screen from his sensitive dark grey eyes.

John and Lydia turned back as they saw the others advance to meet them, and Josiah noticed, not without the sharpest of sharp pangs, how fresh a light there was in her blue eyes, how rosy a flush on her brow and cheeks. It needed brisk walking to overtake them, but then Josiah contrived to edge himself between the pair, and talk of Benjy's mats, of the freshening heather underfoot, of birds in flight to their nests, and the

sky overhead ; of anything, in short, but the subjects uppermost in the minds of all.

Long before they had reached Side-o'-Beck, he put his arm within that of John Booth, and said, 'I think we'd best say good afternoon to Lydia and David now. There will be some family matters to talk over and settle down yonder,'—a nod of his head indicated the where,—'and I want a private word or two with you. We can take this path down the hill, it is a short cut to the Out Lane.' A secret squeeze of the arm encased in plum-coloured broadcloth emphasised his words.

John's fair face contracted to a frown, and his lips twitched nervously. He had no mind to be led away against his inclination ; at the same time, he had no excuse to offer for intrusion on family privacy after Josiah's hint.

Lydia herself appeared taken by surprise, and not too well pleased.

'Mother will expect yo,' she said ; 'an' if it's about Mary yo mean, that's'—

'That and other things,' was Josiah's interruption. 'We should really be in the way this afternoon ; so shake hands. Davy can tell you.'

Davy nodded in assent, and they separated.

Josiah led Booth away, not without a consciousness that the young saddler's feet moved unwillingly, and that his head was repeatedly turned over his left shoulder to catch stray glances from another pair of eyes looking over another shoulder.

'What do you want with me you were so mysterious about?' Booth jerked out pettishly, after a moody silence, when they had widened the angle between themselves and the two they had just left.

There was a mournful cadence in Josiah's voice as he responded, 'Hegh, John lad! I'd a notion thy own good heart might have told thee. Do you think it would be right for two great hungry fellows like ourselves to go in and swallow up the bread and things Hartland is finding it so hard to provide for his own bairns?'

'I never gave it a thought,' said the young man, opening wide his faded blue eyes, whilst a faint flush as of shame overspread his face. 'You should have given me a hint before now. Mrs. Hartland has always the tea-things set for all of us. I never imagined a cup of tea would make a difference.'

'A single cup of tea might not. But you see there are two of us, and we can put away as much haver-bread as three or four of their young ones. It is only to-day I have had a full insight into their struggles to live; though I have had my doubts a long while. Bless you, lad, I remember when the beams in their house-place were a sight with bacon and hung beef and onions; an' the bread-flake was always filled. They're bare enough now' (a deep sigh at this marked Josiah's sympathy), 'and you must recollect when there was bread and butter on the Sunday tea-table; now there's treacle for all.'

Booth's countenance had fallen. 'I've heard them talk of hard times and scarcity of work, but I had no notion they could not spare the food they set before us.'

'It goes hard with folk like them to withhold established hospitality. But I've a notion some one would have to pinch in the week for what we might have devoured unthinkingly with our cups of tea to-day.'

'It all comes of that cursed machinery, and the tyranny of the mill-owners and aristocrats,' began Booth.

Josiah stopped him. 'Some of it may, but not all. I hear *both* sides, John. It is not all money-making with the masters. Foreign markets are blocked to us by the war, and foreign manufacturers are competing with ours by the adoption of the machinery our workmen raise such a hubbub about. The distress in the country is terrible, but it is the war and the drain of English money to keep it up that has done the harm, made taxes heavy and provisions dear.'

'Ah, that's one side of the argument; but, on the other hand, think how many men machinery has turned out of employment. Hartland tells me the stocking weavers of Nottingham are sweeping the streets for a pittance to keep body and soul together. But, by the bye, *had* the Hartlands any private matters to talk over, or was that a mere trick to bring me away?'

'It was no trick. Davy had something to propose at home, and they would have to consult about Mary.'

'Ah! There again,' began Booth, with his arm outstretched for declamation on the evils and cruelty introduced by machinery, and the greed of masters, in all of which there lay a substratum of fact; but they had by this time reached the

humble cottage door of Thomas Longmore, and on Josiah's invitation he entered, to share a meal of milk and oatcake with Josiah.

Nothing had as yet been said about George Mellor, or the change in Walter Hartland attributable to him; but it was not possible for poor young Booth to keep George Mellor's name out of his conversation long together.

He returned to his old subject, pleased to have new hearers in Thomas and Betty Longmore, who listened attentively; the former calmly smoking his long pipe in the chimney corner.

But no sooner did he happen to say, 'Ah, you should hear what George Mellor has to say about it. He has been all over the country, and knows what the suffering is, and what brings it about!' than Betty Longmore's tongue was loosed, and she gave him her opinion of George Mellor, and those who upheld him, with all the angry vehemence of a mother denouncing the beguiler of her own sons, a woman with no fear of the law of libel, no training to lubricate rough thought with the oil of good breeding.

As Mellor's friend, John came in for his own share of abuse. Josiah might as well have attempted to arrest a waterfall with a feather as to stop his mother's angry tongue; and, unable to rebut or refute her voluble assertions, the pale-faced young man at last beat a retreat, his thin lips quivering and twitching with irritation.

Josiah followed him down the lane, designing to soothe his wounded feelings, but as he rather extenuated his mother's outburst than defended George Mellor,—nay, pointed it with an exhortation for John to keep clear of the cropper and his schemes—he was not very successful.

'You see, John, it comes very hard upon mother to have her two eldest sons both led away into bad company and underhand dealings till they cannot face their own honest hard-working father and mother; and that's what George Mellor has done.'

'More likely your virago of a mother drove them from home to more genial company,' was John's quick retort.

'There might be something in that, had Jack and Bill come in for mother's grumbling. Father and I got most of that. Jack and Bill were out all day at work. There was always a

scuffle to have the house clear and a warm supper ready for them. "What they arn they've a reight to have" was the word for them. It was not until George Mellor came back and led them to spend their nights and their money away from home that mother turned round on them. They were not very brotherly to me when I was a little lad, or after I took to books; and now—well—I'm half ashamed to own them. And it's all Mellor's doing.'

'Mellor's doing indeed! Probably you will be ashamed to consort with me next, my fine fellow, because I too am an admirer and friend of George Mellor's,' remarked John, with a sarcastic curl of his thin lip.

Josiah was silent for a minute or so; then he replied slowly, 'I owe to you, John, nearly all the education I have had. The debt of gratitude is deep. You are young and excitable, an enthusiast in all you undertake, but you are wavering, are like red-hot iron on the anvil of George Mellor's strong will. As he bent and moulded my rough ignorant brothers, so will he bend you into a tool for his own ends in spite of all your education and advantages. Already I perceive with sorrow that you are forsaking the religion of your pious parents for a delusion that will prove a snare to you, soul and body, unless you keep out of danger, and set a guard on your own wanderings in thought or in person. Do keep away from Longroyd Bridge and the fellows hanging about there. Do you desire to sink to the level of illiterate brutes, whose sole glory is cock-fighting or badger-baiting?'

'You are mistaken, you are mistaken!' thrust in Booth hastily. 'Such sports are not for such a man as Mellor. He is burning with indignation at the wrongs heaped upon our working brothers.'

'Yes, John, and you are scorching at his fire. He has something worse in hand than either cock-fighting or badger-baiting, or report does him wrong, and he is leading you and others astray. And, now, look you, I love you too well to see you taking your present course without a word of warning; but I tell you candidly, if you continue one of the noted frequenters of Wood's cropping shop, there will have to be a limit set on our intimacy, much as I shall regret it.'

'The sooner the better!' retorted John, and with a bound from the elevated footpath, he crossed the road with head

erect, lips and nostrils throbbing, leaving Josiah to look after him and shake his head sadly.

For some time Josiah's mind had been considerably tossed and troubled in his efforts to reconcile his allegiance to his very good old friends at Side-o'-Beck, and his newer one at Wright's. He could not shut his ears to the darkly mysterious rumours afloat, or to the wild utterances of John Booth, and that day had given him fresh food for reflection.

'If I cannot save John,' he said to himself next day when at work, 'I may at least preserve Lydia from his influence. The lass is dazzled with his fine talk and his good looks, but the fancy will wear off as she gets older; she's not sixteen yet, or near it.'

But Josiah, who was twenty-four, clear-eyed, thoughtful, and intelligent, did not need telling how the factory system, which called mere infants from their homes to earn their bread under hard taskmasters, made them premature men and women at sixteen, self-dependent, and in most cases self-assertive also.

His ruminations therefore took another turn, and whilst he chalked out a pair of fashionable pantaloons on a piece of brown kerseymere, he thought, 'Yet, there's no knowing. These factory lads an' lasses are for courting an' marrying long before they're out of their teens, bringing trouble on their shoulders. An' there's no knowing what notions John may be for putting into her young head. I've done my best all along to keep Lydia out of the ruck yonder at Dacre's mill, an' she's as modest a lass as ever stepped, an' has kept herself to herself more than Mary seems willing to do. But oh, I've done her an ill turn if, in trying to keep her clear of the factory lads, I've led her right into the way of John and his new notions for turning the world upside down and setting man's reason against God's revelation.'

There was a pause to correct measurements which had gone astray with his thoughts. He shook his head sorrowfully as he took up his shears and his reflections.

'I hope he has not been talking any soft nonsense to her. She's too young to begin sweethearting, yet my heart misgave me yesterday. It would be a bad job for her if John is courting, and she takes up with him. Heigho! It would be a bad job for me too—but, there, there, I must not think of myself; I must think only how to save her.'

After another pause, he began afresh. 'Surely I'm not judging John hardly, from any selfish prejudices! God forbid, when I owe him so much—but'—

And so his cogitations went on from day to day, until he finally resolved to have the matter fully out with Booth.

CHAPTER VII.

THE WAINWRIGHTS OF GREENFOLDS.

LYDIA was far from pleased with Josiah for carrying off her interesting companion so unexpectedly.

He had been discoursing eloquently on the brutality of the overmen in the mills towards the children under their control, expressing his sympathy with Mary and her whealed shoulders, now and again straying off into eulogium of Lydia's own patient endurance under like tyrannical hands, mingled with questionings of the Divinity which tolerated a system of which such brutality was a part, and for which only her extreme tolerance could make excuses.

And if she was not competent to understand all his florid eloquence, or his classic allusions to Arachne and Penelope; if his scraps of poetry or his frequent quotations from the *Rights of Man* and *The Age of Reason* in his discursive oratory were lost upon her, she could admire all the more for want of understanding, giving him credit for higher intelligence and loftier scholarship than even he professed.

He was woefully vain, or he would never have indulged in such absurd declamation to the simple-minded, untaught factory girl; but to have found a listener who hung upon his words as if indeed they had been gems of eloquence and not meretricious paste, who flushed at his words of praise, and paid him the homage of profound attention, was too flattering to his self-love for any thought of unfitness.

As for her, she was quite capable of appreciating the high honour this gifted being did her in his selection of her humble

self as a walking companion, the receptor of his confidences, his aspirations, and his aims. She was too young to analyse; she was not too young to feel.

She had listened, as usual, with not much consciousness of aught but the overwhelming tribute of the great scholar's sympathy and attention to her uneducated self, and wondered if her careful appropriation of spare minutes to the study of David's old school-books, and those Josiah had left in her charge, would lift her nearer to his intellectual level in time. Association had already smoothed her rough speech. But her spare moments were very few. After she had dragged her weary limbs home from the mill at night, she was only fit to drop asleep, often before she could take a mouthful of supper. Only on Sunday afternoons could she snatch up a book for a while, and then there were many distractions.

Turning over in her own young mind these possibilities, and striving to recall the utterances of John Booth during that afternoon's walk, she made a much less attentive companion to David than she had previously done to him.

'You're vexed 'Siah has carried off John,' remarked her brother, as they neared home. 'But you might have axed what I had to tell you.'

'Why should I be vexed?' she answered in a tone of denial to which her cheeks gave a negative; adding, 'And surely, David, yo shouldno need axing, if yo had anything particular to tell me.'

'Well, it's of no consequence now, we're so close at home,' said he, stalking before her into the garth, as much disappointed at her want of interest as she at the departure of their agreeable friend.

Their father, sitting on the wooden bench, for a wonder without the little ones around him, rose on their appearance and entered the house.

Whatever Lydia might have thought, Marian was well content to see them return unaccompanied by the young men, for a variety of reasons, and she made no remark on their absence.

She had never felt less inclined to have a stranger at their board, and such was John Booth to her.

'Wat's in such a queer mood I hardly know how to tell him about Mary,' she said to herself.

But she managed it, and was surprised at the eagerness with which he offered to take Mary himself in the morning over to Liversedge. 'Mr. Wainwright's a fine fellow, staunch and upreight, though he do have a mill full o' machinery; an' his wife's as hearty as himsen,' he said. 'It's a rare chance for Mary if they'll only take her.'

Her success in one direction induced her again to bring forward Benjy's project for adding to the family income; weighting her own opinion with that of Josiah.

Hartland this time took the thrum mats in hand, examined their construction, laid them on the floor, then with a padding underneath as Josiah had suggested, and, with an approving pat on Benjy's curls, pronounced his opinion that he was 'a sharp lad, and might expect the mats to goa amang folks as had money to spend.'

Things were going on so swimmingly that David thought his own scheme stood a good chance. Yet he determined to wait until his father was off with Mary in the morning, and then sound his mother on the subject in the first instance.

Before the sun had risen, the Hartlands were astir and at their frugal morning meal; Marian herself being up and about, to see that Mary was satisfactorily equipped, so as to do them credit. The girl's hair, now deepening to a pale brown, was smoothed under a clean linen cap; one of Lydia's pink kerchiefs covered her bruised skin, and was tied round the waist along with the string of a clean check apron; her shoes, well greased, were clasped on over blue worsted stockings of the mother's own knitting, whilst the legs of a worn-out pair served as mittens, and over all went her grey duffel cloak, after a thorough brushing and shaking.

As Marian looked on the pretty smiling face set round with the prim bordering of cap and hood, and the merry dimples no slubber's harshness had been able to efface, she muttered a fervent 'God bless thee, child!' and pressed one of her rare kisses on the young brow.

In another moment Mary's skirts were brushing the dew from the tufted London-pride as she followed her father, himself dressed as respectably as his far-worn garments would admit, though their fashion was none of the newest, as the long waist and broad tails of his coat testified.

There was no direct road from Side-o'-Beck anywhere,

certainly not to Liversedge, though he had a choice of two. The nearer one would have led him across the Halifax and Huddersfield highway, through a lane skirting Grimescar Wood and Fixby Park on the north, by Highfield; but, though he hardly confessed it to himself, he would have felt it an ill omen to lead his young and innocent girl even near to the spot where he had bound his own soul so fearfully. It was that unacknowledged feeling sent him on over the moor northwards by zigzag paths to Elland, where many ways meet, and then by the Spa Well eastward over Elland Edge, and down along the dale by what was known in part as Clough Lane and in part as Bradley Lane (miles away from the mill with the same name).

As they neared Elland, they almost ran against Dr. Hebblethwaite in the dimness preceding dawn; he looked older than when we saw him last, his three-cornered hat tied down over his scratch-wig with his red and yellow silk handkerchief, and a greatcoat over his ordinary black suit, which must have been fashioned thirty years before. He was on foot, a foot spanned by a gleaming silver buckle, and was evidently returning home from some case that had called him from his bed, or kept him through the night.

He accosted them cheerily, and with marked surprise.

'Good-morning. Whither bound so early? Not coming for me?'

Hartland explained.

'Dear, dear! that's sad,' said the old doctor, referring to the bruised shoulders. 'The lass will be best in service. She seems a lively little puss, not fit for a mill; wants a good mistress to keep her in order. Now, her sister's as steady as old Time! But, I say, Hartland, how is the wife now? Can she spare both her girls?'

Walter pressed his lips tightly together for a moment to keep down a rising something in his throat, before he answered bitterly, 'Needs must when the devil drives.'

'Dear, dear! No stronger, eh? Wants physic maybe?'

'Physic's for folk as con pay,' said Hartland, and with another 'Good morning,' he left the doctor standing in the road, following them with his eyes, and with a speech unheard. 'Dear, dear! Honest man that. Am sorry he's going downhill. Coffins cost more than physic. Poor woman, too good

to be lost! And their hunchback lad. Very sad, very sad!' And the doctor too went his way, looking downwards and shaking his bewigged head.

Greenfolds Mill had not been built more than nine years; there had been a smaller one-storeyed predecessor almost on the site, but the strong stone three-storeyed building, with the little bell turret atop, was comparatively new. So too was the great water-wheel and mill-dam in the stream at the back. It was pleasantly situated in a verdurous valley, along which the rapid beck ran right merrily, though scarcely so limpid when it left the mill-pool as when it entered.

The owner's house stood some little distance away, with a few trees and a quaint garden around it; a much older edifice, of dark grey gritstone, weather-stained, and hoary with the touch of time; with windows in odd places of various shapes and sizes, large and small, oblong and square, all with strong stone mullions dividing the upright sections, some with transomes thrown across near the top. A pleasant dwelling, erected when the great flagged house-place was the common room, and parlours were kept for company and ceremonial. There was no lack of solid beams, of wood panelling and carving, or of steps and stairs up and down, besides the great oak staircase with thick carved balustrades. In its day it had been Greenfolds Hall, and the name stuck to it.

A stone wall surrounded the house and grounds, with all their queerly-cut box trees and trim beds, where daffodils were looking down on dead or dying snowdrops, and two ancient wooden gates, one in front and one at the side, gave admission to this enclosure.

A well-built man, dressed in a rather short-bodied, long-tailed business coat of bottle-green, with breeches to match, and a buff waistcoat, over which projected a ruffled shirt frill, was about to enter at this side gate as Walter Hartland and Mary drew near.

He stopped short; a man with strongly marked features, indicative at once of energy, determination, and power, softened by a hearty manner and a fund of tenderness within.

The two had been walking since they left home about half-past six o'clock. It was then more than half-past ten, and they had tramped over ten or eleven miles of rough, ill-made, hard,

rutty road, with the wind against them, and only here and there a patch of soft turf by the wayside.

Mary's weariness was visible in her face and in her gait.

'Why, Hartland, man! is that you?' exclaimed the gentleman; 'and is that your daughter? Well, come in and sit down. I told Mrs. Wainwright she was not to engage any one until she had seen her.'

With this salutation, Mr. Wainwright led the way over a paved path to the side door, which stood open, and admitted them into a spacious house-place, where everything, from the sanded stone floor to the pewter and earthenware on the dresser, the copper pans and kettles on the shelves, the brass flour-dredger and candlesticks on the high mantel-board, the tall stiff chairs and lang-settle, the hams, beef, and bacon hanging from the beams overhead, spoke of cleanliness, comfort, and plenty.

Mary looked around her overawed. She had never seen aught so grand before.

A tall woman, with high cheekbones, was bustling about energetically.

'Janet,' said her master, 'set some bread and cheese and ale before these good people, whilst I go in to my lunch. Treat them well; they have come a long distance. Remove your cloak, and take a seat on the settle with your father,' he said, turning to Mary; 'you will need the fire this cold, raw morning.'

He left the great kitchen by another door. Janet set a small snap-table before them, spread a cloth upon it, added the remains of an egg-and-bacon pie to her master's order, bidding them 'fall to' with a heartiness which had more in it than obedience to a master. It spoke of long service, and the customary hospitality to strangers under that roof. She talked to them freely, 'reckoned Mary was the lass so well recommended,' said she was 'bonnie' and 'tidy,' and 'hoped she was not too young.' She 'had herself been there before Mr. Wainwright had married,' and she gave the best of good characters to both him and his wife. 'Not that master's a mon to stond any nonsense; what he says is bahn to be done, an' done reight off,' she added, with imitative decision.

Just then a bell rang. Janet left the kitchen, returning with

a loaded luncheon tray, and a message that they were to follow her.

Along an oak-panelled passage, paved with diamond-shaped slabs of slate, turning one or two corners, in one place rising a couple of steps, in another brushing past the carved newel of the great staircase and the tall eight-day clock, they were ushered into a room with a polished oaken floor, having a square of Halifax carpet in the centre. The furniture was of dark mahogany, club-footed but straight of limb, and must have come into the house with the bride. The wide fireplace must have been enclosed and fitted with a basket-grate about the same time; ditto the high steel fender and hand-irons.

But on the rug between the father and mother sat a young urchin, who could not have been there more than three years, the brother on Mr. Wainwright's knee not more than eighteen months.

Mary dropped a curtsey. Her father stood there hatless and respectful, but with not an atom of servility in his demeanour. Yet there was a peculiar look of pain in his eyes and the lines at the corners. He felt himself unworthy the kindness shown him.

To Mary the place seemed like a palace, and Mrs. Wainwright might have been an enthroned empress, she scanned all with such wondering admiration. The lady, of whom we have seen nothing since she rode home to Greenfolds on her wedding-day, a hopeful, happy bride, was now a blooming matron, with much of the old Kate in voice and manner. She was dressed in a narrow-skirted, brightly-tinted, short-waisted morning gown, with a loosely-falling muslin frill clasping her neck high behind and meeting low on her bust. There were no loosely-flowing tresses as in Miss Thornicroft's young days. A matronly cap of lace and ribbon served to keep in place the dark curls clustering about her temples, but it might have been a regal crown in Mary's sight. A long, serviceable apron completed her attire, and intimated personal superintendence of domestic affairs.

It intimated nothing to Mary, who was mentally summing up her chances, and wondering if the lady was as kind and good as she was handsome and fair-spoken.

'You appear very young,' said Mrs. Wainwright, addressing

herself to the girl, after a few preliminary words to her father.

Mary was not without confidence. She had settled in her own mind that the place was too good to be lost for want of trying.

'I wur thirteen last December, ma'am,' she said, 'and I sal' grow older.'

'And so will the children,' replied Mrs. Wainwright. 'I am afraid you would let baby fall.'

'Pleas'm, I nursed aar Robby when I wur quite a little lass, and never let him fall.'

'Let me see if baby will go to you, and how you hold him. He can walk, but not far, and you might have to carry him,' remarked the mother.

The child, attracted by Mary's dimpled smiles, put out his arms, and went to her readily. There was no mistake; she had learned to carry an infant when little more herself.

Husband and wife exchanged glances. The fears of Mary and the doubts of her father were speedily at an end.

'The lass seems handy,' put in Mr. Wainwright. The wife assented. There was a little more questioning of the girl's capabilities, but though a much older nursemaid had been required, Mary found herself installed upon the spot, the voice of the master evidently leading the decision of the mother. In fact, he had said that if Mary proved too young for a nurse, she might be sent into the kitchen to help Janet.

So Mary was hired for the year; and her father went home with a crown piece in his pocket, as 'God's penny,' or earnest, leaving behind a fatherly admonition to be dutiful.

Her few clothes were to be taken into Huddersfield, and brought to Greenfolds in Mr. Wainwright's cart.

A load had been lifted from Walter Hartland's shoulders. It was clear the lass had got into good quarters, where she would be well fed and treated. The four pounds she was to have as wages would clothe her well. Marion would have one less to be anxious over.

But the lifting of one load had added to another.

It was against such men as this mill-owner the followers of General Ludd were banding together, with what object he could only imagine from the fearful oath he had been entrapped into taking.

He could not fail to see that Mary had been hired more out of kindness than fitness; and he ground his teeth in bitterness of soul, mentally vowing that neither Mellor nor General Ludd, whoever he might be, should force him to raise his hand against the owner of Greenfolds, to whom he stood doubly indebted; for his own life first, and now for Mary's rescue from brutality.

CHAPTER VIII.

AT A SACRIFICE.

IN Walter Hartland's absence, Dr. Hebblethwaite had come riding over the moor, and stopped at Side-o'-beck, putting Marian in a flutter lest something should have happened to her husband or to Mary on their way. She was far from strong, and a small matter sent her heart beating like a newly-imprisoned bird against its cage.

With her left hand pressed to her side, and a face white to the very lips, she saluted him hurriedly. 'Oh, doctor, surely nowt's befallen Wat or Mary?'

'Nothing worse than meeting with me. But, dear, dear! what a flutter you are in, Mrs. Hartland. You don't seem over strong. Not ready to run a race, for instance.'

The very ghost of a smile flitted across her face as she answered him, resting her right hand on the table to steady herself, her left hand still pressing against her side as if to hold in her bounding heart.

'Nay, I'll be better soon, doctor. I'm only weak, an' I gets easily frightened nowadays, an' then my heart goes thump, thump, an' th' hawse seems to turn rawnd wi' me.'

'Ah, and so the sight of the old doctor scared you. Well, well! Sit down; you'll soon be all right. And how's Benjy by this time?'

So beginning, Dr. Hebblethwaite kept up a running chat with one or other, now and then putting a questioning word to Marian, on whom he kept an observant eye.

After a while he darted out as abruptly as he had entered.

A sort of perambulating dispensary was slung across the shoulders of his galloway in wicker baskets. His patients lay far and wide over the moors, and urgent cases called for medicaments and appliances at hand.

From one of these baskets he brought out a tolerably sized medicine bottle, filled with what former experience had suggested as a specific for Marian's case.

'Here, mistress, take that twice a day regularly — mind, *regularly*. Davy, you see it is taken. There's another supply ready where that came from. And see you get all the good nourishing food you can.'

Marian appeared afraid to touch the bottle held out to her.

'I'm afead, doctor, as we caun't pee fur physic nowadays.'

'Never mind about that, my good woman,' said he, having one foot in the stirrup to depart; 'neither pay for physic nor trouble before you're asked. When I ask for pay you'll be ready. But I'll find no physic if you don't take care of yourself. Let the bairns shift for themselves; ay, for themselves, Mrs Hartland. And don't you go out of your way to meet trouble. It has wings of its own.'

David had rushed out to help the old doctor to his saddle, and caught at his last words.

'Hegh, doctor!' said he, 'mother's bahn to take care of anybody but herself.'

'I know, I know,' assented Dr. Hebblethwaite, as he gave his sure-footed beast a hint to move; 'and to fancy every breeze portends a hurricane. But, poor thing, poor thing! she's had cause. You must cheer her up, lad! cheer her up!'

So saying, off he went on another errand of healing.

Walter brought cheering news home with him in the report of the gracious reception they had met at Greenfolds, and the hopeful outlook of the place for Mary.

'I hope shu'll be a good lass, an' sarve them well, fur shu'll want fur nowt theere.'

'Thank God!' said Marian, as if a great load was off her mind. 'I'd no notion they'd ha' kept her theere at once.'

Dr. Hebblethwaite's kindly visit was detailed, David carefully emphasising the doctor's charge to 'Let the bairns shift for themselves,' it served so naturally to introduce his own project of self-dependence.

Contrary to the expectations of either David or his mother, who left them to talk it over whilst she prepared the evening meal and washed the dirty face of Silas, Walter assented with scarcely a moment's hesitation. 'Ay, ay, lad,' said he, 'we are thrang on the spot here, an' th' wark's scarce. One on us must ha' turned out to seek it i' other places, an' thy limbs are younger than mine. I went when I wurn't older nor yo.'

And so it was settled, with none of the anticipated difficulty; but no one suspected what had been the spur to the father's consent. None but himself could have told how eager he was to hurry his brave son away, lest Mellor should draw him also down to the bottomless pit.

That night, after the little ones were in bed, and David had gone out to meet Lydia and Josiah with his news, there was an earnest consultation between the husband and wife.

Neither was willing to show how great would be the pang of parting with their first-born under circumstances so trying, but talked over ways and means with no reference to the ache in the heart.

'Th' lad caunt goa to seek fortune with ne'er a shilling in his pocket,' they maintained.

'I'se got this crown-piece,' said he; 'but that's nowt.'

'Theere's that money in th' bank,' suggested Marian timidly. 'Thy brother would surely ha' written to thee afore now, Wat, had he been alive.'

She was sifting oatmeal with the left hand into the water bubbling in the porridge-pot over the fire, beating up the contents with the flat porridge-stick in her right, to prevent it lumping, and she said this without looking round.

Wat, on the settle, weary with his long walk, and still more weary of his own troubled thoughts, sat gazing into the fire and was silent.

'I wish to heaven I knew!' he ejaculated at last. 'Sometimes I think Tom must be killed, an' sometimes I feel as it he couldno blame one if I wur to borrow a pound or two; but I'm noan sure I could put it back.'

They were still considering the question when David and

Lydia came in together, she with a curious mingling of expressions on her face.

She was overjoyed to hear of Mary's good fortune, but saddened by the doctor's opinion of her mother, whilst the prospect of Davy's departure shot alternate hope and fear into her breast.

She sank into a seat by the door as if utterly spent. A glance at the table told the absence of the porringers, and up she started to reach them, giving Davy a hint to lift the pot and pour out the porridge in his mother's stead.

The meal over, 'I'll wesh up,' she cried, springing to her feet to anticipate her mother, as if fatigue and she had no acquaintance; and from that night henceforth, whatever her own exhaustion, Lydia insisted on performing the office, although when all was done, and she up-stairs, she might fling herself on her hard bed, too weary even to undress.

Little more was said that night. On the morrow Walter gladdened his wife by saying—

'I'se been thinking o' going to Halifax this mornin' an' gettin' three pounds o' that money out o' th' bank. It does seem as if Tom must be dead somehow. But if he wur here, he'd lend it me an' welcome, I knaw.'

'Well, he caunt blame thee after three-an'-twenty years' absence, an' ne'er a word o' no sort. An' now theere's Mary as well as Davy to think on. Shu mun hae cloathes to keep i' good sarvice.'

'Ay, lass, an' th' doctor said as thou mun ha' nourishing food. Davy telled me, if thou did not.'

Slack as trade had been of late, there was work to be finished and taken to town for a country farmer only there on market days. So Hartland, conscious of time lost, was early on his board to further it before he started for Halifax.

The forenoon was far advanced when he had shaved himself (for the second time that week), put on his best clothes,—such as they were,—and was half-way down the garth, when the horn of the postman rang out on the crisp air.

Hartland himself hastened to meet the man, apprehensive of some direful news from Nottingham likely to disturb his wife. (The postman was wont to save his legs by leaving newspapers at Longmore's.)

'A soldier's letter,' cried he, 'for David Hartland.'

At the first words Wat staggered as if he had been shot; the context reassured him. One or two of Davy's schoolfellows had enlisted. He paid the postage, and, returning, held up the letter.

'It's for thee, Davy!'

'Me? Who should write to me?'

He took the letter and glanced over it. 'Why, this is never for me,' he cried. 'It begins, "Dear father and mother."'

'Hegh, lad! What? Yo dunnot say so! *Then it's from Tom.*' And Walter, whose exclamations had broken from him in short gasps, reeled rather than dropped on to the outdoor bench, too overpowered for further speech.

'Shall I read it, father?'

'Ay, lad, ay.'

The tone of the assent was not that of one glad to have a token of a long-lost brother's life, and the speaker sat with his head bowed, his hands hanging down tightly clasped between his knees. And all the while he listened, he kept on in low murmurs to himself, 'Five minutes moore, only five minutes moore, an' I'd ha' been gone!'

It was a rambling, disjointed letter, written at odd times by different comrades, to the father and mother who had looked for line or word from their soldier son in vain, and had been so long laid to rest in Stainland churchyard. It told of an early draft to India, of sieges and battles under Lord Cornwallis and Marquis Wellesley, of service in the Peninsula, and a final return to England; giving shame, remorse, marchings, wounds, privations, and inability to use a pen as the reasons for long silence. And it wound up with a hope to see them well and hearty, and his dear brother Wat likewise, when he could get his furlough. They were then under marching orders for Leeds.

It was Marian's baking-day; she had left her fire to burn low under her bakestone, and her batter of oatmeal and water to settle in the mixing pancheon, whilst she listened in the doorway.

'So Uncle Tom's not dead after all, an' he's a *corporal!*' cried Davy, as if proud of the alliance.

His father sat still on the bench murmuring to himself.

Marian spoke. 'It's getting late, Wat, if yo're for going.'

'Goin'?' echoed her husband. 'I'd ha' been gone if th'

postman had been five minutes late. Thank God he came! It's a warnin' not to meddle with what doesn't belong to us. We mun manage fur Mary an' Davy some oather way.'

Marian sighed, and went back to her baking in a very questionable frame of mind. She did not 'thank God' that Corporal Tom had turned up to deprive her children of necessaries. She beat up her batter, while Silas and Robby looked on, with more energy than had been hers of late. So, too, she poured it out on her circular board, and swung it round to make her cakes thin, even, and shapable, then transferred them to the bakestone, and thence, when both sides had felt the heat, to the white cloth spread out on two inverted chair-backs, to steam and cool ready for the strings of the bread-flake, all in silence and sharpness so unwonted that the little ones watched and wondered, and finally went to wise and busy Benjy for an explanation.

'Mother's in a hurry,' explained he; 'shu's got Mary's things to wesh and mend aftur'ards.' A fair guess, if not quite reaching the mark.

To Huddersfield went Walter Hartland the following day. On his return he laid three sovereigns down before his wife.

'Theere,' said he, 'keep one o' them fur Davy, an' do owt yo like wi' the rest.'

She gazed at the gold. Joy lit her eyes. The light faded. She trembled. 'How did'st thou get this?'

'Never thee mind; it's honestly coom by,' was his reply, the only one he gave.

Mary's outfit was improved, and Davy was 'over the hills and far away' before Marian discovered that Walter had sacrificed his good watch, his old father's gift to him. He had offered it for sale with so much pain and self-abasement, that what he had nerved himself to do, he could not bring himself to tell.

It was the *first* sacrifice to advancing poverty. He felt it keenly.

Davy only knew that it cleared the way for him to seek fortune, see the world, and help those he left behind; how obtained he had not ventured to ask.

'I'll be sure an' send a bank-note back for it,' said he, quite elate. 'I'll spend nowt I can help, an' 'Siah's recommendation should get me work.'

Josiah had done more than give him a written recommendation; he had kept his word, and instructed his friend how to cut out and put together not only pantaloons, but those newer garments denominated trousers, which were rapidly coming into vogue among civilians, although they had been introduced by the Viscount Wellington (a determined foe to buttons) into his army for the ease of his soldiers, and the abolition of spatterdashes, or gaiters.

The parting with Mary had been a light matter; she was within reach, had bettered herself in going, and having for years done little more than come home to sleep, was scarcely missed.

It was different with Davy. He had been, as it were, the bright spirit of the household, ever in his place, ever ready to dart from the board to save his mother's strength.

It was he who brought the water from the beck, lifted the pot on or off, stretched his long arms to put her haver-bread upon the flake, or reach it down for meals, and, above all, he kept their garden plot in order. *He* was sure to be missed, and he was going forth to an uncertain, untried future.

He was not parted from without many prayers and tears, drawn from the mother whose pride and comfort he had been. She had long ceased to be sanguine. She sent him forth, as she trusted, to save him from designing and evil men; but she could only hope and pray, and trust him to Almighty guardianship. She was unable to comprehend her husband's eagerness to see his son depart.

He, to be sure, felt and said, 'It will mak' a man of the lad. It's high time he larns to forage fur hissen. An' I know he will never do owt to disgrace his gronfaither's name.'

But of that which urged this sending away of his beloved son he said nothing, or of the bitterness of his own soul.

To Lydia this sudden change was incomprehensible. But she felt there was some hidden reason for Davy's haste to 'seek his fortune' elsewhere, and trusted to the revelation of time. That the reasons were good she was assured, or Josiah would not have encouraged his going. Little as she saw of her brother save on a Sunday, she could not say 'farewell' without many a sharp pang.

He had gone with her as far as Longmore's cottage before the last 'Good-bye' was said, or the parting kiss exchanged.

There, too, he shook hands with Josiah, and bade him 'be a brother to Lyd, and looik aftur the old folk for me, will yo, 'Siah? And write and let me know how they get on, there's a gooid chap.'

'You may depend on me,' said Josiah, at the same time pressing into his friend's hand a seven-shilling piece. 'I wish it was more, but it's all I can part with.'

And before David had a chance to remonstrate or refuse, he and Lydia had hurried forward, and were lost in the misty darkness of the morning.

Davy made a brave attempt to say farewell 'like a man' to his old home, his parents, his little brothers and Benjy; but there were tears shed and clinging arms before he finally tore himself away, and, with his bundle shouldered on a hazel stick, turned his back on all, followed by Curly, who could not, or would not, understand being called or driven back.

He was going away from a dread something of which he knew nothing; he was hastening to meet another something of which he knew less.

He left home on the 11th of March, a day of fateful significance, if he had but known it, to him and to his.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FIRST BLOW.

WHILST Mary, freed from the cruel discipline of the slubber's stick, was winning the hearts of her young charges with her lively frolics, proving to Janet and her mistress that there was 'the making of a good servant in the lass,' and she herself was in the seventh heaven of delight at the change; and whilst David was striding manfully over the wild and rugged moors, across the wooden footbridge, and so forward uphill through Marsden, past the clanking forges and machine shop of Enoch Taylor, and with never a prevision of tragedy in his mind, lingered to scan Mr. Horsley's model and busy mill, as with the wind at his back he bent to the ascent of the high ridge over which, bare and bleak, lay alike the Roman trackway and the coach road to Oldham and Manchester, whilst he strode onward, half sad, half sanguine; and whilst his mother had much ado to keep her tears from falling in the batter for her baking, and the father, cross-legged on his board, stitched away in solitary silence, whilst Benjy wetted his thrums with secret tears, and Lydia in the sorting-room emptied her sieves mechanically, thinking only of her brother,—there was assembling in the long wedge-shaped Nottingham Market Place a multitude destined to make that Monday, March the 11th, 1811, a day memorable in English history, and to work woe for the Hartlands, and hundreds of families here unnamed.

Over many-arched Trent Bridge on the south, over the lesser Leen bridges and fords on the west, over Dover Beck and the Foss Way on the north and east; from Bridgeford and Basford and Bulwell, from Sneiton and Lenton and Oxton, from Redhill and Arnold, from Newark and Mansfield, from burrows in Nottingham's sandy rock, from tumbledown tenements of timber and plaster, from thatched cottages, from decent homes of brick, from every nook and corner of the town and country around, a host of frame-workers and others were trooping in, with their white aprons twisted up round their waists, and a look of stern determination in every eye.

By twos, by threes, by scores, they came, some with sticks, and some with crape-covered loaves mounted on poles for all to see, others with significant black banners woefully inscribed, and the bulk with wan, emaciated faces, and scant raiment that told of privation long endured. And still they came and came until the scores became hundreds, and the hundreds thousands, and the faces of tradespeople at their windows, of ordinary pedestrians under the overhanging houses, and of strangers at the 'Angel,' the 'Crown,' and the 'Blackmoor's Head' grew white with apprehension, whilst shutters and doors were hurriedly closed and barred, although not a sign of riot or disturbance had been made.

About the centre of the spacious area stood on a broad base of stone steps, about four feet high, an erection known as the Malt Cross, a most significant name, so famed was the town for its ale. It consisted of a tiled roof resting on six pillars, displaying as many sun-dials as pillars, and a gilded vane above all, to tell which way the wind was blowing.

This Malt Cross was the spot whence royal or municipal proclamations were made to the public; and round it that day surged and swayed the thronging crowd, all ear, for thence, as from a rostrum, working men addressed their fellows with the eloquent tongue of truth, and proclaimed the lamentable tale of woe and wrong, suffering and desolation on the hearths alike of the frame-work knitters and the weavers.

The two were not identical, nor were their grievances, except in the want of work for many, the lowered wages of all.

The stockinger in his frame hooked up successive rows of loops all with a *single line* of thread; the lace weavers, whose machine was but an adaptation of the stocking frame, twisted together and combined a *number* of threads all diverging and suspended on bobbins over a flat semicircular front, as if so many spiders were weaving a web in combination. The knitter, whether by hand or frame, works up *one* thread; the weaver, whether by frame or loom, works up *many* threads.

The listening crowd was not alone made up of these; there were scores of others with dependent trades, wool-combers, frame-setters, and smiths, the first with greasy aprons of green baize, the last with leathern aprons and smutty faces, as if fresh from the anvil and the forge.

Now and again a murmur or a groan, an assent or a denial, caught up and echoed and reduplicated, rose like the angry voice of ocean breaking on the shore, as their selected orators put questions to the crowd whether endurance had not reached its limit, if the time for action had not come, or they were to lie down and die, while the masters grew rich on the produce of wood and iron, leaving their fellow-men to rot and die?

Amongst their grievances were some too technical for general comprehension now, but they pointed to the use of unskilled labour badly paid, to the inability of the best to earn more than seven or eight shillings a week, to over-production, and the product of goods so inferior as to disgrace and destroy the native trade; complaints well understood alike by those who from their vantage on the elevated Malt Cross shouted themselves hoarse launching their vehement thunders against the masters who so sinned, keeping the starving people without bread; and by the multitude, whether they heard wholly or in part, or only caught the wild gesticulations of the self-elected orators, of whom Joe Wrigley and John Greenwood were the foremost.

As the day advanced, and the crowd was multiplied by idlers and sympathisers from every hill and avenue, the mass grew more demonstrative in response, unable to discriminate between the frothy harangue of the demagogue and the genuine outburst of honest zeal.

Manufacturers and magistrates were alike alarmed.

Messengers were hurrying to and fro. Mayor and aldermen were in conclave in the Mayor's parlour; the chief inhabitants dropping in one after another added to the feverish excitement.

Constables, public and private, went forth into the Market Place to preserve peace; the people kept their ground, and one speaker succeeded another; but the peace was not broken.

A very close observer might have noted that Joe Wrigley no longer occupied a place on the Malt Cross, but went here and there amongst the crowd, talking quietly to separate knots of men, only an item in the crowd, undistinguished by badge or token to mark him out from the rest, whilst, on the contrary, his big brother-in-law, Greenwood, was one of the most demonstrative and conspicuous.

Ere long a messenger was despatched by the Mayor to the commander of the garrison in the old Castle, mounted on a rocky eminence high above the town. And presently, with a clank of steel, a flash of sabres, and the tramp of hoofs, a troop of dragoons defiled from the Castle gate into the Castle Road, and, cantering along narrow Park Street and Friargate, went clattering into the long Market Place as the great clock on the Exchange struck three.

At the word of command the horsemen formed a cordon round the assemblage, lining the Market Place from end to end. And there, like equestrian statues, did they remain on the watch hour after hour, only animated to parade the area at long intervals.

And still no breach of the peace occurred.

The Mayor was merciful; the sufferings of the people were indisputable; he would rather help to provide the mass with food and work than inflict a wanton injury. And so long as the crowd was orderly, so long as no weapons were displayed, no missiles thrown, he let the speakers have their say, only keeping the dragoons on guard—in case.

Whilst those speakers—with the old Gaol behind them, and a stony Astrea confronting them from the top of the Exchange, where the Mayor had his court—still held forth and debated, with neither thought nor care for one or the other. But they never broke the peace.

As gradually as they came they seemed to melt away, having

apparently wasted their energy and enthusiasm in vapouring words, groans, and shoutings.

At nine o'clock the troops were released from their long duty, and went galloping back, their sheathed swords rattling and clattering merrily.

'Thank God! the danger's over!' said Mayor and aldermen, shaking hands in congratulation over a hearty bumper of corporation port.

Back too they went to their respective homes, to allay the fears of their families with the assurance that the danger was over, and the town at rest.

Ay, the town was at rest. Night-capped heads might lie down in peace.

But was the danger over?

In the very middle of the night there were silent figures stealing like shadows over the wastes and under the budding trees of the Forest—forest on which town has now intruded—men whose faces were blackened, who wore smockfrocks or shirts over their clothes, or coats turned inside out; men who had arms and had been drilled to use them, some with hatchets, some with hammers, some with staves or guns.

They too came singly or in pairs from every point of the compass, to meet by a network of bye-paths near Bestwood Park, and answer, not to names, but numbers as they came.

And then, three hundred strong, they marched through sleeping Arnold, and thundered with their hammers on the doors of Mr. Bolton's house and frame shop.

A night-capped head was thrust from a window.

'Who is there? What do you want?' was asked.

'General Ludd and his men,' was the answer. 'Open, or we break in the door.'

'Who's General Ludd, that I should unbar door for him?'

'One who will not be gainsaid,' was the response, and before bewildered Mr. Bolton could draw in his head, and thrust his limbs into his nether garments, the outer door was battered in, and 'mid the shrieks and cries of women and children roused from their slumbers, into the house tramped a party of men, with one of stalwart build at their head who well knew the way to the workshop.

In vain Mr. Bolton opposed their entrance, and called for

assistance. His silence was secured by the muzzle of a pistol within an inch of his face.

By the light of a lantern hitherto concealed, hammers and hatchets, wielded by strong men who knew what they were about, beat needles, sinkers, and pressers—all the delicate machinery of the frames—into one indistinguishable heap, with the unfinished hosiery among them, and in less than half an hour more than fifty frames were wrecked,—nothing but the heavy woodwork left, and the owner distracted, to wring his hands impotently and cry that he was 'ruined, utterly ruined! There was nothing but beggary before him or his.'

Surely their appetite for destruction had been satiated there! Nay, it was but whetted!

Thence they marched with shouldered arms to the homes of stockingers in so small a way they surely might have been overlooked.

But no! The scene was twice repeated; a wife was held down in her chair, a husband was felled at a blow, and before the first hour of the morning there were sixty-three useless frames in Arnold.

Yet not a rag, not a coin was carried away. Only the frames were wrecked, only the masters injured, only the 'colts' and others thrown out of work; and only frame-smiths and frame-makers could profit thereby.

Dogs had barked, women had shrieked, blows had resounded, villagers wakening had turned in their beds and wondered what was astir; but no one had a suspicion what deed was done that night, and that inaugural gang of Luddites melted away mysteriously as they had gathered,

If there had been a suspicion anywhere, it was in Geeenwood the keeper's cottage; and there the heavy tramp of men had roused the fears of wife and mother for their Robin's safety during his long night-watch.

Morning brought dragoons with flashing swords to scour the Forest and scare the people of quiet little Arnold, but never a Luddite was there to be found.

They had left General Ludd's mark behind for all the town to see.

They had struck a blow with which England was to ring.

They had struck the death-knell of many a living man, friend and foe.

Yet General Ludd and General Ludd's men had come like shadows of the night, and had vanished like those shadows—ere the morning dawned.

Mr. Bolton said he could almost have sworn to the voice of their leader; but he might almost as soon have sworn to the voice of the wind.

It had begun. What was to be the end?

CHAPTER X.

THE FIRST MARTYR.

NO further outrage having been committed for fully a week, the authorities took it for granted that the display of military activity had overawed the rioters, or that *personal malevolence* had dictated the proceedings at Arnold, and that all was at an end. Back went the military to their barracks, having exercised themselves and their steeds to small purpose.

No doubt individual motives did mark out Bolton's shop as the first to attack, seeing that Wrigley and Greenwood were active movers of the whole, that Greenwood owed his old employer a grudge, and that Wrigley senior would most probably have the job to repair the frames broken in and around Arnold.

Very small motives too frequently do underlie demonstrative zeal, in patriotism as in other things.

A week went by. Peace seemed restored.

Then one village after another farther to the north and west was startled out of its sleep by the tramp of marching feet. The hammering and hacking of lace and stocking frames was comparatively noiseless, but the terrified screams of women, the muffled cries of strong men overpowered by numbers, could be heard, and spread alarm.

Nottingham rang with the echoes.

At least a hundred frames had been destroyed in this last raid alone.

Again the dragoons were vainly galloping hither and thither;

constables, public and special, as vainly went prying and questioning here and there.

General Ludd and his men might have been ghosts gone back to their graves.

There was consternation throughout the county, consternation in the council-chamber of the Mayor, as one after another the ruined hosiers came with their complaints, urging and pleading for redress.

And there was consternation in the picturesque woodland cottage of Robin Greenwood, whither Patty had crept all in a tremble, with her babe in her arms, to whisper her fears and her surmises about John, and to seek consolation.

'There's been no scant of money with Jack of late,' she said, 'but where he gets it I'm afead to think. He has not had a ha'porth of work in his frame for more than a month. He was not home the night of the great meeting; an' for three nights this week he has gone out by stealth after I was in bed, with a smockfrock o'er his clothes an' a face all black with chimbly soot. An' he takes with him th' wood-chopper an' a pistol he had got somehow; but where he hides it in the day-time I cannot make out. He was not at home all last neet. And oh, mother and Nell, what am I to do if the soldiers have caught him, or come a-seekin' on him?'

There was many a poor wife and mother asking the same question, but the soldiers had not laid hands on a single culprit.

'This would not have been in Manchester,' exclaimed the agitated Mayor. '*There* is a constable worthy the name.'

Straightway a mounted messenger was despatched to Manchester for the advice of that astute individual, and on his advice was again away to the metropolis, whence he returned with two specially-named police officials from Bow Street, men trained to track and to ferret out hidden crimes, and warranted as keen and active as the Joel Sladen engaged by Manchester in extremity ten years previously.

Whether they were a little more scrupulous than Sladen, or their sagacity was overrated, or Luddism was too occult for discovery by human intelligence, or had been overawed by the extra troops detained in the town on their march to Hull, or the *furore* had worn itself out, or the comet with two tails had spread dismay, or the nights were too short and clear for

their purpose, nothing more was heard or seen of the Luddites for several months; and there was some talk of sending the Bow Street officers back to London.

In the cropping shop of sly John Wood, George Mellor grew savage at what he called the poltroonery of the Luddites.

'They had put theer hands to the plough an' should ha' driven the furrow reet to the end. I've no patience wi' men as turn back from glorious work like theers.'

'Happen they want arms an' funds,' suggested Sowden quietly, without looking up from the huge shears or the cloth he was manipulating.

'Arms? want arms when they're strong enough to take them? Thou'rt a cowardly fool, Sowden! An' as for funds, they've done nowt for th' brass subscribed an' sent them by friends and sympathisers from all parts.'

'Thou may be reight, Mellor, an' me a bit on a coward, but I'se none such a fool as to part wi' my brass before I knaw who's to have th' handling on it, lest it might happen stick fast i' th' wrang fingers.'

But in his own breast he thought, 'Oho! Mellor seems to know a lot more about them crazy Luddites an' their funds than honest folk should. Who finds th' brass to pay rogues to wreck an' riot? Better give it th' poor folk as is starving. I say nowt, but theere's no law agen keeping one's eyes an' ears oppen.'

Months went by, months in which Josiah did much to wean John Booth from his dangerous companions, and Lydia unconsciously did more. Months in which Benjy's new mats were exhibited in Mr. Wright's shop, and found ready sale at a good price as novelties, though the profit to the young inventor and worker was wretchedly small; months during which Robby took Mary's place in the mill, and lost all the rosiness of his cheeks, all the light-heartedness of childhood; months during which came at intervals letters from David home and to Josiah, telling sad tales of the distress in Lancashire amongst the weavers, and of his own privations before he could obtain employment; telling, too, how at last it had been obtained at Mr. Craig's in St. Ann's Square, thanks to his friend's recommendation, and how from the first he had found respectable lodgings with a steady young tailor named Toft, whose home was near a wide street called Ancoats Lane,

amongst great tall factories; months in which David was woefully missed at home, and Hartland himself worked with less and less spirit, he got so badly paid for what he did; months which made fewer demands on Marian's strength, but failed to renew it; months in which nothing more had been heard of soldier Tom. November came, bleak, foggy, miserable; cold and raw for Lydia and Robby to turn out before five in a morning and grope their way over the moor by the light of a bit of candle in a turnip lantern.

November brought the postman with another *Nottingham Review* for Walter Hartland, which he left, as was his wont with mere newspapers, at Longmore's to chance delivery.

It happened to be Tuesday. As Wat passed on his way to town, he looked in on his neighbours, and Betty handed the paper to him, saying—

'It's well for yo as have pappers sent to yo from boath Manchester an' Nottingham! We have noa sich luck. But happen yo'll let 'Siah bring it to read out th' news to us.'

The promise was made, and he pocketed his paper, helping Thomas Longmore to mount the great heavy piece of flopping cloth on his shoulder, and bearing him company into the town.

He was himself taking home an overcoat for which he was anxious to be paid, having himself with some difficulty purchased the cloth. It was for a farmer who commonly attended the Beast-market.

There he loitered about, went to the 'Boy and Barrel' tavern frequented by his customer, left the coat, went in search of fresh work, and returned. The farmer had been, exchanged his old coat for the new one, and left word the tailor was to be there at three o'clock. Again he waited, and had a glass of ale to keep out the cold. At twenty minutes past three, up came the farmer on his nag, with a companion, both of whom had made pretty free with the ale-can.

He began to beat Hartland down in his price, and ended by paying him one half, and telling him to wait another week for the rest.

The man jingled his guineas in his pocket all the time, and rode off with a laugh, as if he had perpetrated a capital joke.

Exasperated and disappointed, Hartland sent after him

something that was not a benediction, and strode away without much thinking whither.

Unfortunately his steps turned towards Longroyd Bridge. On his way he was overtaken by John Booth, hastening to reach Wood's before the men left for their drinking;[1] he had a saddle across his shoulder which he had orders to leave for a clothier who put up at the 'Bridge Inn.'

'I've no time to spare, for I must get back, but I've heard something to-day Mellor would like to hear. There's been more frame-breaking in Nottingham. I'd like to know what.'

Hartland remembered his newspaper. Here was a reader ready provided.

The burlers, preemers, and men were turning out of both Wood's and Fisher's. On seeing Booth and Hartland together, and the partly-opened newspaper, several turned back, Thorpe, Ben Walker, Hirst, Jack Longmore, and Sowden, with one or two others.

They found Mellor at the door of the raising-room, already lighted up. His eyes dilated as they rested on the newspaper. In less than two minutes Booth stood amidst a group of coatless men, with shirt sleeves rolled above their elbows, and their bare brawny arms folded across their chests, listening with varying expressions on their faces as the slim young fellow read out, with nervously excited lips and thin weak voice, the startling news the paper had held since the previous Friday, which ran thus:—

'The system of frame-breaking in this neighbourhood, which recommenced about eight months ago, after a lapse of thirty-six years, was renewed on the 4th inst., after a short interval, by breaking six frames in Bulwell. The violence above named was but the prelude to scenes still more violent and awful; for on Sunday night last a party of men, intent upon breaking frames, assailed the house of a person of the name of Hollingworth, at Bulwell, who had rendered himself obnoxious to the workmen, but who, from timely intimation, had removed part of his frames to Nottingham, and had provided seven or eight persons, armed with muskets, to protect the seven remaining in his house. Notwithstanding the formidable nature of this defence, the assailants, after eighteen or twenty shots had been exchanged by the opposing parties, forced their way into the house; and when in the act of forcing the door of the room in which the frames stood, the first man received a shot into his abdomen from a man in the house, which in a few minutes deprived him of life; but

[1] Tea-time with those who drank tea.

he had just time to exclaim, "Proceed, my brave fellows; I die with a willing heart!" His companions immediately conveyed his dead body to the borders of the Forest, near to which the house of Hollingworth stood; and then, with a fury irresistible by the power opposed to them, they again entered the house, and in about an hour and a half fully completed the object of their attack; while the *guards*, or what should have been so, sought their safety in flight. The same night ten or twelve frames were destroyed in a house at Kimberley, though not of the obnoxious kind; and the reason assigned to the master of the house for this violence was, that he had been in the habit of learning *colts;* that is, he had learned persons to make stockings without their serving a regular apprenticeship to the trade. We understand the rioters took nothing away except defensive and offensive weapons, nor destroyed anything except by accident, but the frames that were the objects of their vengeance. Monday passed over with only heavy murmurs and threats; but on Tuesday, eight or nine frames, coming from Sutton-in-Ashfield, were seized in Basford and burnt. The few of the Queen's Bays at our barracks that could be mounted were called out; but being scattered in the different villages, they were of but little avail, in particular as the rioters knew how to evade their appearance. On Wednesday evening, the latter, to the number of one thousand, from the neighbouring villages, assembled at the seventh milestone on the Mansfield Road, about three hundred of whom were armed with muskets and pistols, and the others with weapons of other kinds, and proceeded to Sutton-in-Ashfield, where they broke about fifty-four frames; some accounts state the number as high as seventy. What few of the Mansfield troop of volunteers remain attached to that corps were called out; and being joined by seven dismounted dragoons, who happened to be at the latter place, escorting two French prisoners, they proceeded to Sutton, and secured from eight to twelve of the rioters, who were examined at Mansfield by the magistrates on Thursday, four of whom (three being from Arnold, and one from Hucknall Torkard), were brought in a post-chaise to our county gaol in the evening, escorted by some of the Holme Troop of Volunteer Cavalry, the whole of whom passed through this town between two and three on that day; as did the Bunny Troops about six in the evening, on their way towards the scene of action. In short, the military seem to be in motion in all directions.'

'Ay, let them keep in motion!' cried Mellor, his face all in a flush, the veins swollen on his forehead, and his eyes blazing as it were with savage passion and exultation mingled. 'Ned Ludd will take terrible vengeance, and lead them a dance before they've done.'

'Hegh! but what o' the dozen o' Ned Ludd's men as hev been caught? It's like they may ha' to dance upon nothing,' put in Sowden drily. 'An' what o' that young fellow as wor shot?' and he looked askance at Booth. 'I'se be bahn he's left a mother an' faither to fret o'er him, an' happen a sweetheart, or a wife an' bairn. It's ill playing wi' edge tools.'

'Get away to thy drinking, thou croaking coward, and don't meddle with things thou hast not the spirit to understand. Thy chicken heart has no capacity to gauge brave deeds. That heroic youth was a noble martyr in the great cause of freedom!' burst from Mellor with fiery vehemence.

'Ay, get thee gone!' cried Thorpe; 'or thy Nance will gie thee summat thou will understond.'

Sowden took the hint, saying to himself as he hurried home to his house at the Yews fast as his long legs would carry him, 'Happen I'd best ha' said nowt, but I wur bahn to gie that poor silly lad a faitherly warning. I hope I hanno thrown my words away.'

He had not. John Booth folded up the paper in a sort of brown study, oblivious of the loud-voiced discussion around him, or of the head of John Wood put in at the open door and speedily withdrawn, until he was roused by the voice of Hartland asking—

'What was't thou had to tell Mellor, John?'

He started at the inquiry, and hesitated, and even when stimulated by Mellor's sharp 'Out with it, lad!' he was less fluent than ordinary in the delivery of that which he had gone there expressly to reveal.

It appeared that only that afternoon two old customers had met in Mr. Wright's big shop, and, after shaking hands, had begun to discuss the aspect of affairs in Nottinghamshire, to which they referred as well-known matters. The one had been Mr. Wainwright, who, in his ruffled shirt, top-boots, high-collared, long-skirted, thick drab topcoat, and low-crowned black beaver hat, with a narrow, curly brim, looked the very model for a bluff, hearty Yorkshire manufacturer with whom the world went well.

The other, towering above him, clad in an overcoat of clerical iron-grey, his shirt front void of ruffles, as the white neckcloth round the upright pillar of his throat was guiltless of a bow, looked for all the world like a well-drilled lifeguardsman in masquerade.

'Hegh, Mr. Marston! how do you do?' was the salutation of the former as their hands met in a grip not meant for fragile fingers.

'Oh, well, thank you! And how goes on the mill?' was the response, in a voice like the blast of a trumpet.

'As well as could be expected in these unsettled times. I'm not dependent as formerly on a set of drunken croppers and raisers, who worked or played at their own sweet wills. The shearing and raising machines turn out better work, and more of it, in less time and with less labour than the old methods, and I've not to ask my men whether I shall get work off the premises to time or not.'

'Why should you, sir? A master's contracts are not to be at the mercy of ignorant servants. If you pay men for their labour, and they play when they should work, you are justified in setting them aside. Machinery is destined to do great things for this country, sir, though there are destructive madmen who will not see it.' He spoke with the haughty assumption of one who believed in humility as a grace for the poor only, though not an ungenerous fellow in the main.

'Madmen indeed!' assented Mr. Wainwright. 'They are cutting their own throats. The worsted and woollen manufacturers are so hampered and restricted by short-sighted legislation that a man needs to take every advantage machinery affords in order to hold his own against the confounded foreigners who have got *our* machinery in full swing, and are not hampered by the numberless petty restrictions with which the Legislature has fettered the home trade and checked its development. We must have the same machinery, or better, if we would cope with them. We shall need to put forth all our activities when this disastrous war comes to an end. Then there will not be mills enough or machinery enough to meet the demand, and there will be work for whomsoever will—easier work than hand labour. Ay, and the produce will be cheaper. The working man will be able to lay out his wages to better advantage, and to surround himself with comforts unknown to the class now.'

'No doubt of it whatever. But how did you find trade *to-day* at the Cloth Hall?' questioned the reverend gentleman, with some point.

'Very dull, sir. The manufacturers of worsted goods were complaining bitterly. Those confounded riots in Nottinghamshire are answerable for much of it,' replied the cloth-finisher warmly.

Another gentleman, hitherto unobserved by them, who had been purchasing a pair of spurs at the counter, here struck in.

'Yes, sirs, and I consider the weak and impotent magistracy of Nottingham responsible for these fresh outrages on civilisation. I see they have roused at last and captured a few of the confederates. But, sirs, if they had read the Riot Act, and arrested the inflammatory demagogues urging the mob to wanton destruction from their Malt Cross last March, they would have nipped the conspiracy in the bud.'

'Right, Mr. Radcliffe, right!' promptly responded the Rev. Bertrand Marston to his brother magistrate. 'The lower classes require to be kept in order with a strong hand, sir. There should be no shilly-shallying. A magistrate who is pusillanimous is not fit to hold his Majesty's commission.'

'The working classes, sir, would keep themselves in order if it were not for a set of idle vagabonds, who, to serve their own interests, inflame their minds against order and authority. It is against these ravening wolves in sheep's clothing I would act, and act promptly, if I had to deal with them.'

'I'd save you magistrates the trouble if General Ludd or his followers came my way. I'd shoot the first man who put foot on my premises, by Jingo! I would!' cried the mill-owner in desperate earnest.

'And I'd hold you absolved, Wainwright,' said the soldierly parson, laying an approving hand on the other's shoulder. 'Men out for unlawful purposes must take the consequences.'

Close behind them, sedulously stitching the flap of a lady's saddle, had sat John Booth, drinking in every word as the conversation proceeded, his lips twitching nervously as if he would have liked to add his opinion to those expressed with so much freedom, and wondering to what outbreak in Nottinghamshire they referred.

Now that he was satisfied on that head, he reported the conversation with less resolution and assurance than might have been expected from his eagerness to unfold his budget.

He was scarcely prepared for George Mellor's outburst against these three gentlemen, whom he denounced as flinty-hearted tyrants, grinding the faces of the poor under the heels of their boots, 'men courting the red vengeance of the oppressed.'

'Nay, Mellor, I dunnot think that o' Maister Wainwright. He helped to save my life when I wur knocked down an'

robbed. An' our Mary says theer sarvice is like heaven after th' mill,' interposed Wat.

'Ay, *after* th' mill. An' what better is it fur th' folk in his mill? Dost think he feeds them wi' fine words? I tell thee he's as hard as nails. Thou and Booth here are just two milksops. He comes talking here o' the rights of man an' the oppression of the poor, but will he throw in his lot with them who would help to set the wrong right?'

Booth's only answer was, 'I must be off. I've outstayed my time. Here are the preemers and burlers coming back.' And out he went at a run, lest his resolution should give way.

Sowden's words had not been lost upon him; he had no ambition either to 'dance upon nothing,' or to be shot as a martyr, and leave the old folk at home to grieve for the son on whom they had set their hopes.

Well had it been for him if a monitor had been always at hand with a tonic for his mental weakness.

CHAPTER XI.

A REED SHAKEN BY THE WIND.

IF with less precise detail, yet the *Leeds Mercury* had spread the news of Luddite outrage over a wide area never penetrated by the *Review;* but George Mellor had reserved its contents for a special few, not caring to daunt the courage of his followers at the outset by the story of arrest and violent death.

The paper in Booth's hand had shown the futility of this, and his own anxiety on the subject was too strong for any opposition to the open reading of it.

He was mad with himself when Booth hurried off, his fervour evidently cooled by what he had read. It had all along been Mellor's desire to enrol the perilously weak-minded young fellow among his sworn bondsmen; and hitherto, owing to some counteracting influence he could not fathom (though he suspected Josiah Longmore), he had never prevailed on him to take the oath. And, without that, though he had made a tool of him unsuspected by Booth himself, he did not dare to unveil the whole arcana of his plotting, much as he needed his secretarial aid.

He could not fail to perceive that Sowden and Booth between them had infected the knot of listeners with their wavering doubts, and it needed all the skill and eloquence he was master of to bring them back to his views. In his annoyance, he, no doubt, said more than he intended; there were preemers and raisers about with mouths and ears agape, to

say nothing of Sowden, quietly taking down his shears from their nail to resume his occupation.

He did a stroke of business unawares, enlisting the admiration of three or four of his involuntary auditors; but they had no secrets to keep, and carried their versions of his incautious speech far outside the cropping and raising shops. He gained thereby one or two fresh disciples in the shop, whose utter ignorance laid them open to receive grandiloquent assertion for veritable gospel, and several adherents among the discontented or unemployed out of doors. But before they became fettered by the enslaving oath of Luddism, they had, by open discussion, unintentionally marked him out more conspicuously than ever as a disaffected malcontent, and put Mr. Joseph Radcliffe, J.P. on the *qui vive.*

It first brought down upon him his cousin Joseph, the same who had procured his castigation, when, as a lad, he pelted the old sot in the stocks. Joseph was the elder of the twain, a steady, plodding man, having a wife and child, and in business for himself as a cloth-finisher, employing two or three apprentices. His house and cropping shop might have been found on the south side of the river, some distance from Longroyd Bridge, at a place called Dungeon Bottom, from its proximity to Dungeon Wood, which took its name from the ruins of an ancient dungeon, of which gruesome traditions were afloat; and it lay a little out of the highway between Huddersfield and Marsden.

Joseph Mellor was a domestic man, fond of his wife and child, and attached to his home. He had made his own way in the world simply by minding his own business and leaving that of others alone.

It was no slight matter that brought him to interfere with his imprudent cousin George.

He was angry, and remonstrated with fiery George on his 'headstrong folly,' as he called it.

'You must be mad to prate to a lot of well-paid croppers of tyranny and oppression. They have nowt to complain of but their own loss of time through tippling. You don't hear the weavers crying out against oppression, and they have most need, when a man cannot earn a pound a week working late and early. *They* are quiet.'

'More fools they. But wait till machinery throws the

hand-looms idle, and then the weavers will rise. They are rising in Lancashire and Cheshire. And would you have us croppers bide still, until every end of cloth goes to Bradley's, or Horsley's, or Wainwright's, or some other infernal shearing-mill, and never one comes to be fairly cropped and paid for either at this shop or thine? What would'st thou do then?'

'That'll hardly happen in thy time or mine; or long before it does, both John Wood and myself will have saved enough either to live on, or to set up gig-machines of our own.'

'And let us poor croppers go starve,' sneered George, with withering contempt.

'When there's no work for croppers, there will be need of strong men to make machines. And never a machine works without hands to feed and control it. When one door shuts another opens,' replied Joseph, with promptitude.

'By heaven, that door shall never shut if General Ludd can prevent it!' and George gnashed his teeth in a rage.

'Hush!' cried his prudent adviser, looking round as if in fear of eavesdroppers; 'you will surely bring disgrace on all connected with you. I am surprised that Mr. Wood and my aunt permit such dangerous language under their roof.'

'Look you, Joseph,' retorted the other defiantly, 'they mind their business, and do thou mind thine, and leave me alone. I'm out of leading-strings. When I want thy advice, I'll seek it.'

'Well, George, if you run your head into a noose, it will not be without warning. Don't come to me if you get into trouble,' were the closing words of his cousin Joseph Mellor, as he departed in a huff.

When the men left for their 'drinking' that afternoon, George Mellor was there, fully equipped for riding, in a high-collared dark-green topcoat Walter Hartland had made for him, with top-boots and spurs, and a low-crowned beaver hat; in no respect having the appearance of a man oppressed or downtrodden.

Whither he was bound no one asked. It might be a foregone conclusion in many minds.

He was met by townsfolk on the Wakefield road, then again after he had turned into the highway to Sheffield.

There was a good firm road under his horse's hoofs, thanks to Macadam, and he tore away in the early twilight, as if, like Johnny Gilpin,

> 'He rode a race,
> And for a thousand pound.'

It was nearly ten o'clock when he entered Sheffield, and, not as one at all dubious of his road, he made his way to the 'Three Nuns' in Orchard Street, where he was disposed to put up for the night.

A sign passed between him and the ostler, who was all deference. 'At what hour in the morning?' asked the man.

'Half-past five,' was the answer; and into the inn he went for supper and a bed, knowing his steed would be well cared for.

At five he was up and at breakfast. At half-past he was in the saddle and away through narrow and break-neck streets, thronged with cutlers, grinders, platers, smiths, men with leathern aprons and cadaverous faces, all going to their daily work. Some looked up at him, and signs were made, but on he rode, nor stopped until he reached Chesterfield, where he baited his horse, and took a second breakfast in haste.

At Mansfield he treated himself to a glass of ale and his steed to a quart, and then dashed on again under the leafless birches and oaks of Sherwood.

It was nearly noon when he reached Red Hill, and left his horse to be rubbed down and well attended to after his thirty-four miles' morning run.

As he had come through the Forest, he had observed how unlike an ordinary day was that, so numerous were the people on the roads, and so many were the soldiers and militia posted or parading here and there, evidently on guard over the civilians.

His destination was Arnold and its churchyard. As he hastened thither on foot, the same secret signs exchanged in Sheffield were passing from one to another on the road; but he took no heed until he neared the village church, and found its graveyard in the possession of hundreds of people.

A smile of satisfaction crossed his face as he took up a position near the lych-gate, and searched the crowd with his quick black eyes.

It was the day appointed for the interment of the young man Westley, who had fallen a victim to misleading zealots. 'The Martyr,' as George Mellor had dubbed him.

There was heard the heavy tread of a multitude, the roll of a muffled drum.

All eyes were turned to meet the coming procession. Hats were doffed, and the spectators stood on tiptoe, expectant.

To the amazement of one and all, the coffin was preceded by the two sheriffs and half a dozen magistrates, and surrounded by a crowd of solemn constables with their staves ready.

Few, besides weeping relatives, followed as mourners. George Mellor looked in vain for Joe Wrigley and John Greenwood among them, and he ground his teeth at what he called their 'cowardice.'

But close behind followed a company of dragoons, and whilst the coffin waited for the clergyman under the lych-gate, and there were signs of strong excitement in the throng, there was read out, not the solemn burial service, but the brief and imperative Riot Act.

There was a momentary lull, then the tremulous voice of the clergyman was heard. Advancing, conspicuous in his white robes, he turned and led the way to the open grave, the dragoons followed closely, the roll of their drum accentuating the solemnity of the ceremonial.

Barely was dust consigned to dust than a scene of the wildest confusion ensued, men and women pressing to look down upon the coffin before the hurrying sexton shut it from their view.

Turbulent threats were heard, the man's martyrdom was openly extolled. But the sheriffs were prompt. The churchyard was cleared, the refractory were taken into custody, the magistrates remained on the spot until all was quiet, and then a guard was left behind to preserve decorum.

George Mellor, with set teeth and knitted brows, maintained his post to the last, peering into the crowd in vain for those he sought.

Skirting the churchyard as he turned to go, he came face to face with Joe Wrigley.

'How is it neither you nor Little John were among the mourners?' he asked severely, with a frown.

'Did you not know?' exclaimed Wrigley in surprise. 'Greenwood is in gaol! and if I had made myself conspicuous to-day, and been taken, our whole scheme would fall to the ground,' he added, with cunning deprecation.

'Ugh!' grunted Mellor, at a reply so little in accord with his own reckless theories. 'But what is this of Greenwood? When was he taken? He was not named among the arrests.'

'It was all a mistake of the printers. The *Review* gave his name as George Green, and the other papers copied the blunder.'

'So much the better!' said Mellor decisively. 'His brother-in-law is with us. It might daunt him to hear that Little John had been captured. You must contrive means to stop any letters reaching him.'

'Um! that's not so easy. Robin's set against us, and he's sharp. But Hartland joined! Him as lectured us both for spinning a plaguey chafer. Oho! Times must ha' changed with him!'

'Ay,' responded the other grimly, 'and with others. But are not you in sufficient force to storm the gaol and free our brothers?'

'All in good time, sir. There's other work to be done first. Mappen other brothers may fall into the gaoler's clutches. It will rouse the "lambs" to rescue all at once. We have closed their mouths with a secret promise of rescue,' he added, with a cunning light in his ruddy green eyes.

'Then see you do not fail!' said Mellor, changing the subject with, 'And how come in subscriptions?'

'Oh, bravely!'

And then followed mysterious plotting never to be revealed; plotting in which the daring spirit of Mellor had to be kept in check by the wily and cautious Joe, who resembled a sleek, soft-coated mole in his unseen burrowing and undermining, having a tender regard for his own skin.

It was late on Saturday night before George Mellor left his horse at the 'Packhorse,' the posting-house whence it had been

hired, stoppages for secret business at Mansfield, Sheffield, and Wakefield having lengthened his homeward journey.

The shops were all in darkness, the men gone.

Mellor strode into the house-place, where his stepfather sat comfortably smoking a long pipe on the lang-settle by the fire, with a tankard of ale on a round snap-table at his elbow.

'Has any one been here to-night?'

The query must have been understood, for the pipe was withdrawn, and amid a cloud of smoke came the answer—

'None but the lads from Fisher's.'

'Ugh! Not Booth or Hartland?'

John Wood shook his head.

The other scowled.

'Where's mother?' he asked crossly.

'Gone to bed. I thought it was best,' drawled out the elder slowly, with a sly look, not lost on the impatient stepson. 'Thy supper's on the tray covered up, and I'll draw thee a mug of ale. T'others are all out.'

'T'others' meant a lodger and two indoor apprentices, Smith and Hall.

'Well, didst see th' end of the poor lad?' was asked as the frothing ale was set down.

'Ay, it was a sight to be remembered. His was the first blood drawn, but it will put vigour into the good cause; none the less for the imposing spectacle the clever magistrates have made of his burial.'

He was eating with an appetite, but as he ate, he described the scene in the churchyard; but of arrests, or his interview with Joe Wrigley, he said nothing.

His stepfather was at liberty to conclude, if he liked, that enthusiasm and hero-worship had alone set his wife's fiery son galloping upwards of fifty miles and back to witness a stranger's funeral.

At all events, he asked no more than Mellor seemed inclined to tell, and made no comment when the latter, pushing his plate aside, looked meditatively into the fire, whilst mechanically filling a pipe, and muttered between his teeth, 'Neither Booth nor Hartland here to-neet!' as if it disconcerted him.

It had not been alone at Wood's or at Wright's that the Luddite outbreak had been discussed. In the Market-place, around the entrances to the Cloth Hall, in and around every inn and tavern from the 'George' and 'New Inn' downwards, and over shop counters, openly, boldly, it was talked over, alike by those who denounced as by those who upheld it, and they were by no means solitary; but there were others who spoke below their breath, and whispered in sly nooks what listeners might not overhear.

So it happened that when John Booth carried the *Review* to Josiah Longmore, and narrated the conversation he had overheard in his master's shop, he found his friend well prepared to reason with him.

'Look you, John,' said he. 'I heard Mr. Horsley in our shop to-day tell Squire Radcliffe that there were more than nineteen hundred bankruptcies in the kingdom last year, all owing to the stagnation of trade, and he put it to the Squire's common sense whether he thought machinery had aught to do with the failure of Seaton's Bank here, or the Banks of Pontefract and Selby. And they both agreed that it was the prolonged war, and nothing but the war, that was answerable for the distress throughout the country. I wish you could have heard him explain the difficulties manufacturers have now to contend with, and the reasons so many work-people have been dismissed. He said that mills and warehouses were groaning with goods the owners could not sell at any price, and he said the people of Huddersfield might thank their stars that the cloth trade was fairly brisk, if light worsted goods were at a discount.'

'Ah,' put in John Booth, 'that's the master's point of view. He would think differently if poverty pinched *him*.'

'Hegh, John! what do all those bankruptcies mean but pinching and poverty among the masters? Have they not a hard struggle to meet their payments, and find wages week by week, if their goods do not sell, and to keep up their credit in the market? I know how hard Mr. Sykes finds it to get in his bills from some of them, and how slow they are to give orders.'

'But what good will it do them poor frame-workers to break up th' frames?' asked Lydia, walking home between them, whilst weary Robby lagged slowly in their rear.

'It'll only throw more on them out o' wark and add to the misery.'

'It will rouse the masters and the Legislature to a sense of their iniquity in oppressing a downtrodden people,' cried Booth, waving his arm grandly.

'I think it will rouse the masters to obstinate resistance,' said Josiah promptly, 'and the Legislature to severity, if Mr. Horsley and Squire Radcliffe may be trusted. At all events, it's best for such as you and me to keep clear of men who counsel violence. We have our lives, our characters, and our situations to lose or preserve. And I hope we may never hear of such disgraceful doings in Huddersfield.'

'Hegh, dear me! I hope not,' said Lydia. 'What would become of us if the machinery in Dacre's mill was broken?'

It was too dark to see the varying expression of Booth's countenance; there was a low-toned whisper in her ear—'Never fear, I'd take good care of you, Lydia;' and just then they stopped to say good-night to him.

And if he pressed Lydia's hand impressively under cover of the gloom, Josiah gave his a still more significant grip.

He went back to Wright's with a mind disturbed and opinions shaken. Lydia's simple questions had struck deeper than Josiah's second-hand arguments. But the latter followed up his advantage when no Lydia was present, and he could be more outspoken and explicit.

So it came about that Booth, halting between two opinions, held himself aloof from his associates at Longroyd Bridge, though more than once or twice before the month ran out, the news of fresh outrages both in the town of Nottingham and around it, outrages which seemed to mock alike the military and the magisterial powers, set him tingling to rush thither and learn what was thought of these proceedings there.

Yet ere long Mellor sought him out, and by the force of his dominant will regained his ascendency over the weak-minded youth, and never let go his hold again.

He had gone avowedly to ask Booth's opinion of the Nottingham Mayor's orders to close both public and private houses at ten o'clock at night, and forbid the inhabitants to walk abroad later.

His own opinion, given with a grim smile, was, 'Bah! The

impotent fools. They are playing into Luddite hands. Clear the streets and leave them free to do their midnight work unseen and uninterrupted! And as for the Prince Regent's proclamation! Fifty pounds for the betrayal of a sworn brother! There's not a man of the whole brotherhood would venture it. Bah! the offer only shows the weakness of our rulers!'

CHAPTER XII.

A CRUSHING BLOW.

GEORGE MELLOR'S precautionary hint to Joe Wrigley had been too late. A letter from Nell was already on the road telling with simple pathos the tale of John Greenwood's arrest, and the double anguish of his family alike at the danger in which he stood and the disgrace he had brought on all connected with him.

'*Mother is broken-hearted*,' it ran, '*and Robin says he shall never be able to look honest men in the face again—the good name of the family is gone. He says he shouldna be surprised if his place was taken from him and another keeper put in his room. There's always plenty of folk ready to kick a man's shoes off his feet an' put them on theer own. Patty's like one gone mad, crying an' raving o'er Jack as if he'd been a good mon to her as Robin's been to me. Robin an' me tells her she need be thankful he is locked up for all the good he's been to her. If shu'll leave off wringing her hands, an' give her lace-cushion a turn, shu may keep her child and hersen better nor he ever did, wi' no fear on a licking at every turn. But a wife's a wife after all, an' shu mun just han her fret out. An' Joe's never been near her since Jack warr taken. Some o' th' folk say theyn hang Jack, some say as they con only transport them all. But the Masters an' Quality are that mad there's no knowing how it will turn out. An' yow see theere's been hundreds o' frames broken, people thrown out o' wark, an' masters ruined. You may thank God you have*

a good husband, one not like to join them wicked Luddites in plundering an' destruction.'

There was no one at home to read the letter when it came but Hartland himself, and writing puzzled him. Still he did his best to spell it out, standing in the doorway for the better light, his back half turned towards Marian, who had left her baking to listen, unaware that Silas, mounted on a stool, was smearing her moulding-board with the oatmeal batter into which he had dipped his meddlesome fingers, all unconscious of his mother's blanching face or the tragedy unseen. He looked up and saw her press both hands upon her heart, but what knew the child of the agony she strove to hold down?

All at once, as Wat spelled out the last paragraph, he, the good, kind, tender husband of whom even in poverty she was so proud, dashed the letter to the ground, struck his hand upon his brow, and with a groan of anguish darted down the path and out of the garth.

He had read out the words before their full import struck him.

Of late Wat had begun to talk strangely in his sleep of Ned Ludd, and oaths, and Mellor, and desperation, quickening old alarms in her breast.

Now, his sudden agitation as he flung down the letter and fled gave a stabbing point to Nell's remark. Down Marian sank upon the floor all in a heap, dragging from the overturned chairs her baking sheet and the warm damp cakes upon it.

She was too weak to bear the strain of her brother John's delinquency and the evils it entailed; the fresh stinging conviction that her Wat had joined the lawless mob struck her down like a shaft of lightning.

On a low stool almost in front of the fire sat Benjy, knitting away at a door-mat, with a pile of cut thrums close at hand on the settle, and Curly coiled up beside him on the hearth.

He was nearly thirteen, and quite old enough to understand much, if not all, of the letter read out in his hearing; and though his knitting-pins went slowly on with a steady click-click, he was on the alert.

His father's groan, his mother's sharp cry of pain, sent his work to the floor, and with a scream, echoed by little Silas, he hurried to her side with all the speed at his command, and in

an agony of terror cried aloud, 'Faither! faither! faither!' as he endeavoured to raise his mother's head.

But no father answered to the call.

Only Curly, roused from sleep, answered with sharp, quick barks, and added to the commotion.

'The mat, Silas, the mat! bring the mat!' cried Benjy, pointing to his unfinished work.

Before blubbering Silas could comprehend, Curly, long before taught to fetch and carry, had reached the hearth at a bound, and came back tugging at the nearly complete mat, dropping a needle and roving out a row of stitches by the way.

Still crying 'Faither!' at the pitch of his weak voice, Benjy placed the mat between his mother's head and the hard cold stones, and, utterly bewildered by the trying situation, went to the door, and, mounting with difficulty the wooden bench beneath the window, strained his eyes and his thin treble in hopes to reach the father then out of sight and hearing. For though the house stood alone, a Yorkshire moor is not, as many suppose, a level plain, but all heaps and hollows, and Hartland, rushing out with his brain on fire, had instinctively sought a spot where he could exhaust his wild frenzy unseen and unheard.

Poor Benjy, in his strait, caught sight of the whining dog. 'Oh, Curly, Curly, could yo fetch faither? Fetch faither, Curly, theere's a good dog!' he cried in desperate entreaty.

With an answering look of almost human intelligence, Curly put his nose to the ground, gave a short snap of a bark, and was off.

Back into the house went the boy again, knelt on the floor, raised his mother's head to his breast, raining impotent tears on the pale lips and cheeks he kissed so eagerly, and crying piteously, 'Oh, what shall we do, what shall we do? Oh, she is dead, she is dead! Mother, mother, do speak to us!' whilst little two-year-old Silas looked on vacantly, and cried for he knew not what.

She had lain there in a sort of syncope fully ten minutes, which seemed like so many hours to helpless Benjy, overwhelmed with care for his mother and attempts to soothe Silas, when the bark of Curly was again heard approaching. Presently he came bounding up the path, and after him at a run the father he had gone with so much sagacity to seek.

'My God!' he exclaimed in a tone of remorse, as he threw himself beside her; 'what hev I done now? Marian, my love, my wife, speak to me! Benjy, some water, quick!'

Then, remembering that Benjy could not be quick, he started to his feet, brought water, sprinkled it freely in her face, chafed her hands, raised her in his arms, and, heedless how his feet were tangling Benjy's knitting-cord, carried her to the settle, and renewed his almost frantic efforts to restore her.

There was no sacred store of brandy now for such emergency, only a little alegar in an earthenware cruet, and nearly five minutes more went by before Marian's blue lips showed a tinge of returning warmth, and her eyes slowly unclosed, to close again, and yet again, before they seemed to recognise them fairly, and a faint, 'Wheere am I?' set her husband's pulses beating to the tune of hope.

'It is all that accursed Luddism as is the cause of this. Shu's suspected me for manny a day, I'se sure. An' between me an' Jack, her heart's fair brokken like her mother's. What's to be the end? God only knaws. An' if Curly had not found me, an' barked, an' plucked at my untied breeches as if he'd ha' torn them from my knees, till I knew summat wur wrang, I'd happen ha' lost her altogether, the best wife as ever a mon had. Shu wur nearly gone.'

So ran the train of his thoughts, but he could not absolutely know how very nearly indeed he had lost her.

It was with a penitent but thankful heart he set the kettle on the fire, and with Benjy's help cleared away the disorder likely to offend her housewifely instincts, and provided her own unfailing panacea—a cup of tea; now and then stopping to bend over her with solicitous affection, and press her hand or put her pillow comfortable.

She would fain have risen to resume her baking, and prepare the midday meal, but the attempt proved its futility.

'It frets me to lie here, it dun, an' bakin' only hauve done, an' th' dinner to cook; but I goo giddy if I dun but lift my head, an' my heart goos thump, thump, like a hammer, an' then flutters like a hundred birds' wings.'

So she was obliged to lie still, with all the gnawing pain at her heart, and all her womanly anxiety to be up and doing, whilst Wat swung the baked cakes over the strings of the

bread-flake, and did his best to bake up the remaining batter, and Benjy scrubbed the potatoes for boiling, and fetched from the farm the buttermilk that was to serve, with the potatoes, for dinner.

To accomplish this feat, he yoked Curly to a little cart Josiah had long ago made for him out of a box, for the wheels of which a carpenter had supplied a couple of solid discs, whilst John Booth had made him quite a fanciful set of dog harness. The cart had been turned to account in many ways, but was chiefly used to convey Benjamin farther than his own crooked limbs would carry him.

Great was the grief of Lydia, when she and Robby reached home exhausted, between nine and ten that night, to find her mother lying on the settle wan and feeble, and Benjy with difficulty beating up the porridge in the pot on the fire, which he could scarcely reach.

'Whatever's th' matter wi' mother?' she cried, rushing towards her, forgetful of fatigue, and taking the toil-hardened hand in her own trembling palm.

'I'd some bad news this mornin', Lyd, an' I think I fainted,' said her mother. 'I shall be better to-morrow.'

Her father, stitching away on his board to make up for lost hours, kept his head down, but said never a word.

Lydia caught a glance from Benjy's eye, and asked no more, but the start had overpowered her own fatigue, and in a moment she was bustling about to supply her mother's place.

Supper was soon ready and over, and into the back kitchen she carried bowls and platters to wash, whilst the lads betook themselves to bed, where Silas had been for three hours.

Her mother, whose only supper had been a cup of tea and a bit of oatcake, was her next care. She opened the press-bed, shook and arranged the bedding, and not until she had helped to lay her mother comfortably therein would she admit that she felt in need of her own.

She carried with her up the stone stairs just a pressure of her mother's hand, and a few words to sweeten her own repose.

'God bless thee, Lyddy; thou'rt a good lass. Good-neet.'

Benjy had lain awake up-stairs, and when she passed through the boys' room on the way to her own in the dark as usual, he called her to his bedside, and in a whisper not to be heard

below, unfolded to her all the sad letter had told of the Nottingham frame-breaking, and of his Uncle John being in gaol, and his grandmother heartbroken. But of the true cause of his mother's swoon he knew nothing, and could tell nothing.

'Poor mother!' murmured Lydia to herself. 'No wonder she fainted. I think as I should, if I heerd as our David wur in gaol.'

And in spite of her long day's toil, and wearying walk home, her thoughts kept her awake nearly until midnight.

Up again she was ere the clock struck four, shivering alike with cold and insufficient sleep. On she shuffled her clothes in the dark; necessity and long practice had made her expeditious, and she had no superfluities in the way of adornments to arrange. What was done in the way of washing and combing would be done in the back kitchen below.

As she went down, she wakened sleepy Robby with a heavy shake, lit a long brimstone match and a bit of candle at the gathering 'flaight,' which kept a smouldering fire alive in the grate, and saved the tedious and noisy operation of light-striking over the tinder-box with flint and steel.

Then, going about as lightly as might be in her stocking-feet, she roused the fire, set on the pot, and beside it her mother's kettle, and swiftly, for time was flying, had platters, porringers, treacle, and milk on the round table, the porridge bubbling in the pot, her own quantum and Robby's steaming on their platters; the haver-bread and a morsel of cheese in her little brown basket for their 'nooning,' and her mother's teapot filled on the hob.

The porridge, cooled by this time, was hastily despatched by both, and, opening the door quietly, they were off to their work, and hurrying as if for their lives.

Josiah was ready and waiting.

'You are late,' said he.

'Ay, lad; theere wur nobody but mysen to do owt this morning. Mother's badly. Shu fainted dead away yesterday. Dun yo think, 'Siah, as yor mother would go up theere a bit? Faither mun tak' his work hoam to-day, an' mother'll be for trying to wesh, an' shu's noan fit to stand.'

'Go on. I'll overtake you,' said Josiah, and into the cottage he went.

Go? Of course she went! When was Betty Longmore

known to leave a neighbour in a strait unhelped, however much she might grumble on her own hearth?

She went, 'rubbed out' the clothes for the sick woman, and did a number of neighbourly jobs without hope of fee or reward; only glad to be 'free to stay, sin' Thomas han gone wi' his end o' cloth to Huddersfeldt, an' nobody 'll run away wi' t' haase.'

Walter Hartland had also his call into the town, but he kept clear of Longroyd Bridge, then and for many weeks afterwards. That day his father's watch disappeared from his fob,[1] but two pounds ten went there instead. And he carried home with him some fresh mutton to tempt his wife to eat, and afford the nourishment Dr. Hebblethwaite had said she stood in need of, with a loaf of white bread, and one or two other little matters long strangers on their table.

He had not parted with the watch without a pang, but he longed to atone if possible, and he could not weigh his father's watch against his wife.

In great trouble, and panting in her hurry as they went, Lydia confided to Josiah the supposed cause of her mother's illness, as received from Benjy. But Josiah, though he said nothing, suspected something more.

That night she and Robby were left to the escort of John Booth, who made the most of his opportunity to impress the girl with the strength of his attachment to her, and in spite of her anxiety about her mother, and a drizzling rain that was falling, she felt her heart uplifted above pain or trouble, or any earthly care.

But she did not confide her trouble to him as she had done to Josiah. She would have been ashamed to tell her fine young lover the disgrace her own Uncle John had brought upon them all. Confidence in tried and trustworthy Josiah was quite another thing. He was just like a brother.

Josiah had excused himself on the plea of a most urgent engagement, but she did not miss him on this occasion.

His engagement was a stiff walk to Elland after his business was done, regardless of mist, or rain, or mud, or anything but his errand.

Straight he went to Dr. Hebblethwaite's door and knocked, much to the discomfiture of the old doctor, who, seated com-

[1] Fob—the old watchpocket below the waistband of trousers or breeches.

fortably before a good fire, and a well-cooked pheasant from Grimescar, did not relish a call from his supper to a patient that drizzly November night.

Josiah was known, and his errand soon told, much to the doctor's relief in one respect, though he kept up a running commentary of 'Very sad, very sad.'

'Mrs. Hartland, of Side-o'-Beck, is very ill, sir. She had some bad news in a letter, and swooned away at the shock. She had no one with her but poor Benjy, and lay a long while on the floor unhelped. If you will please call there to-morrow, sir, as if by accident, and do what you can for her, I shall be glad.'

He laid a half-guinea on the table and said, 'If that's not enough for a visit or two, sir, will you please tell me? But I entreat you not to say a word to them of my coming here.'

'Very sad, very sad! But put your money up, young man. I can do my best for the poor woman without a fee. And I do not charge so exorbitantly for a visit, in any case.'

'No, thank you, sir,' said Josiah, with decision; 'I do not wish you to attend Mrs. Hartland out of charity, and I am afraid more than one visit may be needful. I owe them a debt of gratitude, and so they will be under no obligation to me. But I should not like them to feel as if they were.'

'Very good, ve-ry good. I honour your principles. Let me see—you are with Mr. Sykes, aren't you?'

'Ay, sir.'

'Ve-ry good.'

And in another minute Josiah was hurrying on, and wondering if he could find the near cut across the moor in the dark and the rain.

The doctor called in the morning, 'most opportunely,' as he remarked, 'seeing that Mrs. Hartland appeared so unwell, and so little fit to stand ironing clothes.'

He asked questions 'quite as an old friend,' felt her pulse, timed it by a turnip-shaped old watch, and said she must take care of herself, and she would soon be well.

But when Wat, obedient to a quiet glance, followed him down the garth as if to help him to his saddle, he was told—

'Your wife has had a terrible shock of some kind. It's sad, very sad. She must be kept quiet, and be well nourished. Some day a shock of this kind may kill her— No, no; I

want no fee, no fee! Her—her case interests me.' And away he rode, leaving Walter standing with the money in his hand, his brow clouded with terrible apprehensions.

The good doctor came again and again, and she took his physic, but she was ever after subject to sudden palpitations of the heart, and a tendency to faintness without positively swooning.

Dr. Hebblethwaite, foreseeing this, provided a simple remedy to be kept at hand, and instructed Benjy, in whom he took especial interest, how to act, and what dose to administer in case of sudden necessity.

She had rallied sufficiently to go about her household ways, with such help as Benjy or her husband could afford, when one moonlight night, close upon Christmas, whilst they sat at their scanty meal, strange footsteps were heard in the garth. Curly started to his feet and barked.

There came a peculiar tap at the door. Hartland himself, pale as his frightened wife, opened the door. There were whisperings. He came back for his hat and coat.

'You had better go to bed, Marian,' said he, with an attempt at ease, 'and leave th' door unbolted. I don't know how long I may be.'

Marian's face grew ghastly. Her hand went to her side. She had been expecting something of the kind. More than once Wat had gone out late, and come home hurriedly as if out of breath. And Betty Longmore, in distress over her own wilful lads, had not failed to tell her of Luddite meetings dispersed by the alarm of the volunteer militia Squire Radcliffe had enrolled. Marian kept her fears to herself, but they were not less terrible for being unshared. This summons was conclusive.

Lydia's arms were around her mother in an instant. She made an attempt to rally, but seemed overpowered. With a promptitude and exactness scarcely to have been expected from a boy who looked so small and young, Benjy counted out so many drops from his precious phial into a little water, and held it to the mother's whitened lips. The draught was swallowed and its efficacy proved.

Lydia lay down in her clothes by her mother's side, afraid to leave her alone. It was rest for wearied limbs, if not for brains on the rack.

That night there was a midnight drill two miles away over the lonely moor; a military drill of men who answered to numbers, not to names. And when Hartland again lifted the latch of his door, Lydia was up, and preparing the early morning meal.

Many after that were the nights he spent away from his own home, but there was small need to ask why or wherefore; in his uneasy sleep he told, if not all, quite enough.

CHAPTER XIII.

FETTERED.

MERCANTILE pens had scarcely become familiar with the date of the new year (1812) when Lydia Hartland and John Booth bound themselves by such vows as silly young sentimentalists indulge in before they have plumbed the depths of their own hearts, or realise what the stern realities of life may demand. The girl, who was only on the stepping-stone of sixteen, and the young idealist of nineteen had vowed 'to love and be constant until death;' and they had talked of marrying soon after his apprenticeship ran out, say in about eighteen months.

Yet Lydia had some intuitive perception this would not be agreeable to her mother, and she stipulated with some timidity that nothing was to be said 'to th' folk at hoam' until Marian was stronger.

'Yo see, John, it might put her abaght like. Shu may be better as th' spring comes round,' she urged.

The lives of the Side-o'-Beck family had until of late been too simple and primitive for secrets. Yet now an atmosphere of secrecy pervaded and surrounded the dwelling, and Lydia's premature engagement, adding to the mystery and restraint, became as much a burden as a joy to her.

In his elation, however, John Booth, who had never consulted father or mother on the choice he had made, burst upon Josiah with his rapturous news, and struck him dumb.

'You don't congratulate me,' said John testily.

'I congratulate you, John, but I cannot congratulate Lydia.

A man so unstable, who is in league with desperate men, and has forsaken the religion of his fathers, is not fit to mate with so pure and steadfast a lass.'

'I am not in league with desperate men. I defy the tongue of malice to prove it,' cried Booth resentfully, as if his honour had been impeached.

'I cannot shut my eyes and ears to the signs and tokens of dark and mysterious designs on foot, or the whisperings of rumour. And you must know the militia has not been enrolled for nothing. In the morning as I go to work, at night when I come home, I meet men alone or together, who give me a wide berth as if afraid to be seen; men who neither give nor answer a friendly hail. A man going about honest work is never ashamed to answer a "good-night," or a "good-morning," on the road,' replied Josiah, hardly able to stifle the pain he felt.

He had promised Mrs. Hartland to guard Lydia from this wavering stripling, and now he felt as if he had failed in his trust. He was but a poor weaver's son, but his feelings and his principles were as delicate and true as if he had been 'born in the purple.' It was no small aggravation of his pain to reflect that, in smothering his own old and deep attachment out of respect for the girl's youth and need of a friend's protection, night and morning, he had left her to be wooed by one so utterly unsuitable.

'No one ever met me where I was ashamed to be seen,' cried John haughtily; 'and I am not answerable to you for my movements or opinions.'

'Certainly not,' assented his friend; 'I only hope you will be able to answer your Maker.'

'That is my business,' jerked out John stiffly, and turned on his heel, his thin lips twitching with nervous agitation.

Before the week was out, unstable John Booth had fettered himself body and soul with another vow, born not of love, but of demoniac hate.

Under the taunts of George Mellor, Thorpe, and Benjamin Walker, who declared that his professed sorrow for the poor and destitute was all frothy talk, or he would join them in their league against oppression; that his excited reading of newspaper paragraphs was all a sham; that he kept a cool head, and his interest in his pocket, since machinery had not

touched his trade; and much more to the same effect, he was goaded to exclaim impulsively, 'No one shall call me a sham! I will join you,' although conscience gave his thin lips an admonitory twitch or two.

Without giving him time to retract, a Bible was produced, and there, in Wood's cropping shop, when the reeking oil lamps were still aflare, and the well-disposed workmen had gone away with their week's wages, he took the iniquitous oath of blind allegiance to General Ludd, not without tremor and hesitation. Twice or thrice the form dictated caused him to start and pause and shiver, but there was no drawing back; he saw that in the stern faces around, as he locked the tightening coil around himself. Then General Ludd required him to make a copy of that oath, and to commit it to memory for administration to others when necessary. But the paper seemed to burn his fingers as he took it, and Josiah's latest warning seemed to vibrate in his ears afresh, now there was no help and no recall, and his true friend's accusation was an awful fact.

Once enrolled, he had not much rest. General Ludd, or his tangible double, George Mellor, speedily turned his new recruit to account.

One after another the leading manufacturers and millowners using the new machinery were favoured with admonitory letters headed with rude devices of sledge-hammers and cropping-shears, and signed—

'By order,

'General Ludd.'

These proving ineffectual to stop a single machine, others followed, warning or threatening, where the symbolic skull and crossbones, or even coffins, were added for effect; but whatever their character, or the lapse of time between each, John Booth was the compulsory scribe.

During the same period, the casement of his bedroom might have been found open and his bed undisturbed, night after night, and the mother who had watched so anxiously over his delicate and fragile boyhood had no suspicion how his slight frame was braving cold and mist in marching to and fro at the command of a strongly-built desperado, whose thews and will seemed alike cast in a mould of iron.

Be sure others besides Josiah were alive to the fact of these frequent meetings and marchings, and none keener on the scent than the active magistrate, Mr. Joseph Radcliffe. He set the militia in motion as well as the regulars, and by his vigilance prevented or dispersed more than one midnight assembly. Then the dapper landlord of the 'Packhorse' joined the mounted volunteers, searching far and wide for the disaffected, whom he might have found much nearer home, had he been keen enough to set a watch on the frequenters of his own tap. For it is certain General Ludd's emissaries were at work among the weavers who put up their galloways in the 'Packhorse' stables.

About this time there came another newspaper to Wat Hartland—the *Nottingham Journal* of January 10th, and, as in all cases, at the command he was bound to obey, it went on to George Mellor.

After regrets that all measures, coercive or conciliatory, had proved insufficient to stop the felonious system of frame-breaking, it was there stated that the practice continued—

'if possible, under more aggravated circumstances. No less than forty-three stocking and lace frames have been broken in the immediate vicinity of the town, and several in the town itself, since our last; and what adds most seriously to this evil is, that it has opened the door for the commission of every other species of crime, murder as yet only excepted. Scarcely a night passes without some fresh outrage or robbery, and hordes of banditti infest the country to such a degree that neither persons nor property can be considered safe either by day or night.'

'Is it to perpetrate such crimes as these we have taken thy oath, George Mellor?' questioned Walter Hartland in a tone of horror. 'I'd rather fling mysen into th' river than ha' such on my soul.'

'No, you dainty fool, no. Luddites are sworn to break th' machines that are breaking men's hearts. We are banded to serve our fellow-men and benefit trade. If ruffians take the name of Ned Ludd's men to cover their crimes, we are not answerable for them. An' as for murder, who murdered Westley, I should like to know? And who is to blame if Westley's brethren take revenge for the martyred hero's blood?'

'Hegh!' said Sowden, who happened to be conveniently within hearing, in confidence to himself; 'Mellor's coming it hot an' strong. That chap'll stick at nowt. I'se main sorry

fur Hartland an' Booth. They're a'moast like hares in a trap. But I mun say nowt, or I'se lose my wark.'

Not a week but brought some terrible news of broken frames, attended with deeds of violence, of burning ricks, and plundered farmhouses in Notts and Leicestershire, news over which George Mellor grew exultant. In one case, a man, disguised with a goatskin mask and long beard, jumped from a hedge close to the spot where four roads met, and where houses have since grown, into a cart bearing a frame into Nottingham, and with a large sledge-hammer furiously demolished the frame almost before the carrier walking calmly by the horse's head had time for resistance. Even that was overcome by the threatening weapon, and the Luddite vanished like smoke.

All these startling paragraphs, which made Mellor and his crew triumphant, filled the minds of peaceful citizens with dread and disquiet.

Sympathisers with the objects of the Luddites were many, and money flowed into their funds from all parts of the country, in addition to the small weekly contributions of the sworn brethren themselves, many of whom could ill spare the hebdomadal pence demanded to keep the movement going. Luddism itself was a machine to be kept well oiled. Not content with that, a system of raids for arms and contributions began, and the people of Nottingham began also to garrison their houses, glad to have soldiers or militia quartered upon them for protection, as if the town had been in a state of siege. One sensible master, employing about three thousand frames, sent a sixteen years' old apprentice spurring round the country from village to village with a message to his principal frame-knitters, that on condition his frames were spared he would pay an extra shilling a dozen on all hose, whether other masters made the advance or not. The youth, whose name was Felkin, rode hard and fast, through driving rain and wintry sleet. He was a messenger of glad tidings, and the very storm he braved did half his errand. It prevented the assembling of the Ludds that night, and the doomed frames were spared.

The alarm was spreading, and Betty Longmore, whose two sons had been suspected of following Ned Ludd to do evil, left her warping frame to bear the news to her neighbour,

unaware how every fresh tale seemed as vinegar poured on a raw wound.

If Josiah was reticent, she was not, and he, moreover, was not aware that what he reported to his father on their own hearth would be carried straightway to the moor-top.

At one time it was a daring outrage; at another it was the Bill before Parliament for the more severe punishment of frame-breakers; now Lord Byron's maiden speech in eloquent defence of the exasperated frame-breakers, and against the proposed Act that was to make death the punishment for the crime; and anon it was the strange intelligence that on the 1st of March the soldiers in Nottingham attended divine service with bayonets fixed, an attack upon the county gaol being expected, for the liberation of the Luddites then awaiting their trial.

It was a puzzle to good-hearted Betty Longmore what caused Mrs. Hartland to go so white and faint at the telling, that Benjy had to drop his work and hurry as fast as his limbs would carry him for a cup of water, and the potent 'drops,' to revive her. Betty had no inkling of any connection between the poor woman she visited and those incarcerated Ludds.

One consolation Marian had in the hopeful letters David sent, though he too dwelt on the distress of the hand-loom weavers around Manchester, consequent on the war prices and the introduction of power-looms. He wrote of meetings dispersed by military, and arrests made by the myrmidons of Sladen, the deputy-constable, a man bitterly hated by the poor.

It appeared that David and Peter Toft worked at home for the same master-tailor, whose shop was in St. Ann's Square; and occasionally they did a little on their own account to fill up their time. Moreover, Peter Toft was steady and studious; one of a club of young men who had joined together for mutual improvement, and he had induced David to be one with them. They exchanged books, read, debated, recited, and aspired to amateur theatricals. It was altogether a society in advance of the age, the era of Mechanics' Institutions not having set in.

On the twelfth of the month, when everything in and around them was depressing, even to the weather, one of David's

precious missives came to cheer them. He had paid double postage for it as a double letter, though this double was only a scrap of thin, dirty paper, which fell fluttering to Marian's feet, and when it unfolded, caused an exclamation of joy. It was a one-pound note of Ingham's Halifax Bank. Of this, after filial and fraternal inquiries, the good son observed—

'*I have been a long while saving up this pound. I have done it sixpence at a time. I thought I should have been able to send one long ago, but though I live careful, and don't waste a farthing, I was not able. The club at the "Cotton Tree" only costs me a penny a week, and a penny for half a pint of ale. I walk off with Peter into the fields close by on a Sunday afternoon with a book. It is better than propping up the doorposts, with a pipe in one's mouth, to talk politics with neighbours in dirty shirt sleeves. I have been reading some of Shakespeare's plays. They are wonderful. Charles Smithson lent them to me. He is a fustian-cutter, one of the heads of the club, and quite a self-taught genius. You should hear him speak! I am going to see one of the plays acted by the club when it is ready. They are rehearsing it, and getting dresses made. It is called "The Moor of Venice." He is to play the Moor, Othello. I have never seen a play acted, you know, so I expect a treat. I saw something that was no play acted on Saturday. It seems there was a riot in Shudehill Market here, on account of the prices of meal and potatoes, and no wonder, for some of the poor ragged people out of work look nothing but skin and bone; worse than the poor worsted weavers as come to Huddersfield market. We knew nothing of the riot till we heard a great noise and shouting in Ancoats Lane, and put our heads out of the window to look out. I hope I shall never see such a sight again. There, right at the end of our street, the poor folk had stopped a meal-cart, and were scrambling and fighting to carry off the meal, dropping half on the stones, through the holes in their brats and hankerchers, when down upon them came the soldiers and constables and seemed to hem them in. A fat old gentleman on horseback began to read a bit of something Peter said was the Riot Act, and in another minute there was Sladen, the deputy-constable, and his men, right amongst the crowd, knocking them down, right and left, like ninepins, both men and women, while the soldiers stopped them*

running away. I saw them drive several men and women away to gaol handcuffed together, with their poor clothes torn half off their backs, and some of their faces all gore and mud. The shrieks were awful to hear; and the crying of children for "daddy" or "mammy" was enough to have melted any stone not as hard as Sladen's heart. We were glad to be safe indoors with our work, if it is badly paid for. As for that Sladen, I should be sorry to get into his clutches, for every one says he's a brute.'

Marian's tears had been dropping fast as she listened. 'Thank God!' she exclaimed, when Walter came to the end, 'theere's not much fear on Davy getting into his clutches. Lads as tak' to book-readin', and goo fur walks i' th' fields on Sundays, an' work, an' save fur th' owd folk at hoam, are none like to goo wrang and get into gaol, if they do han theer heads runnin' on plays and play-actin'.'

Alas! poor simple mother, there are more ways of getting into gaol than one.

The getting out is not so easy. So John Greenwood, and those he had led into the snare, had by that time discovered.

His dream of masterfulness had soon come to an end, and now that Joe Wrigley's schemes had ended only in a fœtid prison and manacles for himself and others, John had leisure to think over his misspent life, and to vow amendment if he could only escape. But the remembrance of his direful oath clung to him, and shut out hope of amendment if escape were possible. Then the foolish young lads who shared his dungeon reproached him with their incarceration, and made his life a burden.

Closely as they were guarded, cunning Joe contrived to acquaint him (as he had told Mellor), that an attack on the gaol was contemplated; that Ned Ludd's men would storm it in irresistible numbers before the day of trial, and carry them all off in triumph. Or if not before, certainly after, if they held their oaths inviolate.

But whether this was a mere ruse to ensure silence, or some one had outwitted Joe, the ancient black and white prison, which overlooked the Nottingham Market-place, was guarded by troops night and day, and the contemplated rescue completely frustrated.

On the 17th of March the doom of the arrested Luddites was sealed. Only two were acquitted.

John Greenwood and two others escaped with seven years' transportation to Botany Bay; all the rest, quite lads, were sentenced to fourteen years.

Had they been arrested three months later, their doom would have been *death.*

The Act which made frame-breaking a capital offence was in force at the date of their trial, if not when they were captured; but as the Act was not retrospective, they escaped the heavier penalty. The judge, in passing sentence, did not fail to impress on the convicts this fact of their narrow escape.

Very sad, indeed, was the letter from Robin's wife to announce the sentence. It not only told the distraction of John's wife, and the terrible scene when the prisoners were carried away under guard, barely allowed a common leave-taking with their weeping relatives, but it said that the disgrace was killing their old mother, who had quite lost her senses, and might not live out the week. Patty was distracted, and old Wrigley refused to take her and her child home again; she had brought so much disgrace on herself and on him by her marriage. Whether Joe had thrown dust in his eyes, or the hard father was wilfully acting in concert with Joe, could only be guessed. *His* business was brisk.

Poor Marian! Benjy's little phial of sal volatile was of small use then. His mother sat with her hands clasped between her knees like one stupefied. It was not alone with the crushing weight of the present, but with the dread of a still more terrible future.

And Wat could offer no consolation. Remorse haunted him night and day.

Remorse had haunted John Greenwood night and day within prison walls. And although he did not dare even at the last to break his oath, yet when Patty, taking leave, clung to him and wept over him in his disgrace, as she had never clung to him in his pride and boldness, his heart gave way, and the penitent giant mingled his tears with hers, and implored her forgiveness.

'I've been a bad husband to thee, Patty, an' a bad faither to our lad,' said he ruefully; 'but if I live to come back, thou shan find me a better chap. An' dunno ler th' little one larn

where I am, or how bad I've been, lest he larn to curse his faither. An' oh, Patty, whatever yo dun, keep him from Joe. He's been th' ruin o' me. God bless thee, Patty! thou's been a good wife, an' when I come back at the seven year end, I'll be a good mon to thee. By God's help I will! Good-bye, lass, good-bye.'

He would need God's help and a stout heart if he was to become a better man in that pandemonium, Botany Bay.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MEETING AT THE 'ST. CRISPIN.'

TWO days after the trial of the Nottinghamshire Luddites, and whilst Nelly Greenwood's letter was still on the road to crush still further those on whom poverty and misfortune had already laid its heavy and wasting hand, a stranger entered Huddersfield from the north, and, crossing the still small town without inquiry or visible pause, made his way to Longroyd Bridge as if his route had been well mapped out for him.

He turned the corner of the bridge, and, descending to the water side, proceeded without hesitation to Mr. John Wood's, opened the outer door without knocking, and, passing through the cropping shop without a word either to Sowden or any of the men there at work, bent his steps towards the raising shop, as if fully acquainted with the place, and there, for a wonder, found George Mellor alone.

Their colloquy was brief.

'Well?' from Mellor.

'Two of the men are acquitted; the rest transported,' said the man.

'Ah! I see. The infamous Hanging-bill had not passed when they were taken.'

'Have you your men in training?'

'Yes.'

'The district delegates meet at the "Crispin" on the 21st. A delegate from Nottingham is expected.'

'I will be there.'

And away went the stranger as abruptly as he had entered, followed by curious eyes as he strode through the outer shop, Sowden even putting down his shears to look after the man from the doorway until he disappeared above the bridge.

'A queer customer yon,' observed Sowden. 'He's noather a wayver nor a clothier. I ne'er saw his face here afore in a' th' years I'se worked i' this shop. I wonder what th' chap wanted! He seemed to knaw his way abaght well enough fur a stranger.'

Two of the men exchanged signs and glances.

'Happen he's Enoch Taylor's man, wanting to sell Maister Wood some on his new machines!' said one, upon which the pair set up a loud guffaw, as if the joke was irresistible.

'He's moore like'—and there Sowden stopped. 'But I'd best say nowt,' he murmured under his breath, as a check to his own precipitation.

That night there was another gathering for drill, this time on the southern side of the river, on Crossland Moor; these drills never being held in the same spot two consecutive nights. And then the brethren were adjured to hold themselves in readiness for a crisis at hand.

As the roll was called over, at once to guard against spies and ensure attendance, 'No. 1, 2, 3,' and so forth, each man stepping apart as he answered to his number, No. 39 did not answer to the thrice-repeated call.

'No. 39 absent again! Put a mark against his name!' cried the leader; and John Booth, who looked through a veil of crape and carried an inkhorn, was compelled to put a black cross against the name of the friend whose daughter he had vowed to marry, a masked man named Heys holding a pocket lantern the while.

'His wife's ill,' urged Booth, in extenuation.

'So is my wife ill, dying o' starvation, an' a bairn too; but I'se here!' cried a savage voice from the crowd; and down went the black cross by the side of others most reluctantly.

'Warnings have been again sent to the masters who persist in making wood and iron do the work of men, to lower wages, and leave wives and families to die of cold and hunger!' proclaimed their General.

'Hear! hear!' was the response from two hundred throats.

'We shall warn no more. We shall *act!*'

'Reight, reight! Hooray!' broke on the silence of the night, and the echoes, floating to solitary houses in the distance, gave to light sleepers unquiet dreams.

Parties were told off to special duties, contributions were paid in, to some money was given from 'the fund,' the next meeting was appointed, and the order given, 'Conceal your arms—disperse!'

Hatchets, hammers, swords, pistols, went under aprons, under coats and smocks, and then the crowd seemed to dissolve and mingle with the shadows of the night. There were no watchmen, even in the unlighted town, to call a midnight straggler to account, and for men who lived on the moors and byeways there was still less fear. Yet they went stealthily, as if afraid of an eye that never sleeps, if not of noisy troopers.

As stealthily three or four men, who contrived to be first at their pay tables on the afternoon of Saturday the 21st, and who hurried home with their wages without staying for their customary glass and gossip, might have been seen leaving Huddersfield in the twilight by the Halifax road, had any one been minded to set a watch upon them. Of these, Booth was one.

Though Huddersfield and Bradford at the time were simply rising out of obscurity, Halifax had been an important centre of the woollen industry for centuries. It had been noted for its ancient and peculiar Gibbet law, and the summary execution of thieves and other criminals in the far past by an instrument which must have served as archetype of the more modern guillotine. The old town of the Haly-fax (or Holy face) occupied but a small corner of its extensive parish, which spread for miles over the hills and moorlands, gathering many a township and chapelry into its broad fold, many a benevolent and educational foundation, but for which both David Hartland and Josiah Longmore might have remained in the night of ignorance for ever. Defoe says of Halifax in his day, 'It is a prodigious thing, by reason of the multitude of people who throng thither, as well to sell their manufactures as to buy provisions; and so great is the confluence of people thither, that, except Leeds and Wakefield, nothing in the north part of England can come near it.'

Defoe found the town 'nothing remarkable,' save for this influx on the market days; but between his visit and the date of this story it had sent stony offshoots, full of human life, out in all directions over the wild moors. Thanks to machinery and steam, Halifax has marvellously extended its area and its importance since the present century was young; but the compact and venerable town was even then a busy and expanding place. It had grown considerably in the ten years since George Mellor had been pitched from the coach-top to make friends amongst its people. It had its commodious Piece Hall, built of freestone around an open quadrangle, for the use of cloth and carpet manufacturers; its Calico Hall, for the dealers in cotton goods; separate market-places for corn, cattle, and general wares, to say nothing of a whole row of wool shops. Cleanliness and godliness had provided baths by the Hebble side for the body, a second church to supplement old St. John's, and a Dissenting chapel near the North Bridge for the soul. And if Gibbet Hill, then outside the town, no longer awed offenders, and the pillory had disappeared from the market-place, the stocks still held their own by the ancient market cross, the gaol was ready to receive alike the criminal or the debtor, and there was at Ward's End a public office where magistrates met each Saturday to purge the town of evil-doers, and manage its internal affairs. For amusement there was a theatre and an assembly room, and a great yearly fair for the commonality, held on St. John the Baptist's day, on ground near the church, called Ratton Row.

And alike by the Hebble,—or brook side,—by every beck or burn tumbling down the stony hillsides, rising like an amphitheatre above the old town on the north and east, were busy water-mills by the score, if not by the hundred. Some bore the marks of antiquity, others had risen newly, with long rows of windows telling of whirling machines within. There were corn mills, fulling mills, dyeworks, and mills to grind the dyewoods, paper mills, a shear-grinder's mill, carpet works, and cropping shops. But what concerns us most here were the many new raising or gig mills.

Be sure, for such a community, and for commerce so peculiarly conducted, there was no lack of 'good accommodation for man and beast,' as proclaimed by the many swinging signs at inn doors, alike where the foreign or native merchant

'took his rest,' or the humble drover of black cattle or the thirsty workman called to refresh.

And we may equally conclude that, although the magistrates were on the alert in so busy and thriving a population, a few working men, more or less, coming into the town, or stopping at an out-of-the-way inn, would not be noted.

Then the ancient 'Crispin,' consisting of two floors only, was too retired and lowly to attract observation; indeed, the very raising of the 'Causeway,' on which the old hostelry was situated, had caused the house as it were to sink humbly below the level, and strangers from Huddersfield entering the Causeway from Church Lane might dive into the 'Crispin,' pass the bar on the one side and the taproom on the other, and ascend the dark narrow stairs at the end of the passage, without attracting other eye than that of the landlord or his wife.

Yet no one put foot on that stairway who had not been keenly scrutinised by a working man, who sat alone with a glass of ale and a pipe in an ill-lighted small room, having an open door by the stair-foot; and no one passed unchallenged who could not exchange signals with him.

The Democratic Club was a known and tolerated institution as a club, if its principles were not so well recognised. None of the 'Crispin's' ordinary customers cared who went or came, but whosoever ascended those stairs had to run the gauntlet, as it were, of another wary member in a sort of sentry-box at the very club-room door, and here again had signs to be exchanged. It was as secret as a Freemasons' Lodge.

George Mellor and stolid-faced Thorpe entered the long club-room separately, though they had travelled most of the nine miles of road together, joining first beneath the shadow of Grimescar's hanging wood, but parting to pass singly through Elland, and come together again before they reached Salter-Hebble Bridge, where the stream rushes down with a leap and a bound to meet the more important Calder.

Then they kept together until long after they had crossed Shaw Syke Bridge, and had entered the township of Halifax; but no sooner had they left the moorlands and cultivated fields behind, and touched the confines of the town, than Mellor pushed forward along sparsely-built Church Lane, and left Thorpe to follow at a more moderate speed.

There were at least fifty persons present when Mellor entered

the club-room, as well as he could calculate in the dim light of the shaded oil-lamp upon the table at the upper end, a light which served to cast the main body of the room into shadow, revealing only the more important faces on the platform and the gruesome symbols beyond, which struck all newly-initiated brothers with shuddering awe and terror the moment they entered.

Think if the spectacle that confronted them was not calculated to inspire terror in the minds of rough, uneducated men, in that superstitious age!

At the extreme end of the apartment, at an elevation behind the presidential chair, was a large black screen, upheld by two silent figures in black masks, clothed in the white garments of the grave, and holding murderous-looking daggers in their hands.

This black screen was a transparency, with a brilliant light behind, which falling sideways on the grim upholders, made them visible in all their ghastly suggestiveness, of which the awful transparency left not a doubt. There, strongly depicted in white on the black ground, was a full-sized coffin with a nameless lid, and above that a grinning skull and crossbones, set beween a pistol and a dagger. And arching over all, to make the import sure, was the inscription, 'DEATH TO THE TRAITOR!'

Whatever became of this paraphernalia in the day-time was known only to John Baines and the two shrouded supporters; it was never wanting at a meeting of this kind, to which it gave mysterious solemnity. Few of the members entered without a shudder as it struck the sight.

But George Mellor barely glanced towards this Luddite emblem. He peered into the faces round the walls, and advanced with a firm tread.

John Baines, the democratic old hatter, had just been elected to the chair he occupied on ordinary club nights, in virtue not merely of the sagacity and wisdom supposed to come with grey hairs, but of more than ordinary intelligence and individuality.

On one hand sat a florid, shifty-eyed stranger, in whom George Mellor at once recognised Joe Wrigley, the oily leader and delegate from Nottingham.

George grasped his hand, exchanged a few words, then took

his place on the other side the chairman, to be speedily joined by Thorpe, whom he introduced to Wrigley as his 'right-hand man.'

At a table below the platform, on which were spread papers and writing materials, sat a young pale-faced individual in a secretarial capacity, nervously biting the feather of his quill pen, and vainly trying to keep his thin lips still in his excitement. He was evidently overcome by the importance and responsibility of the post he occupied, so flattering to his self-esteem.

The chairman, after glancing keenly round on the dimly discerned assembly of half-desperate looking men, lean and hungry weavers, rough croppers, their striped woollen aprons girt around their waists, smutty blacksmiths fresh from the forge, a collier or two, and three or four better dressed individuals, apparently delegates from a distance, opened the proceedings by saying: 'As some time has elapsed since the last Luddite assembly in this club-room, and I observe that several new members have been added, whose faces I see here for the first time, and as several delegates are present from important centres in the West Riding, called together for special and important business, I think it is only just and proper that I should explain the motives under which I consented to act as your president; and, that there may be no mistake, I do so before calling upon our friend and brother Wrigley, from Nottingham, to give his report of the movement in his district, important as you will find it. My brothers, I am an old, a very old man, and from my age competent to speak from experience to an assembly composed like this of men not half my age, and others younger still, on whose enthusiasm and hatred of oppression we depend to bring our great cause to a successful issue.'

'Hear, hear!' cried the well-dressed delegate from Nottingham. 'Hear, hear!' echoed George Mellor and one or two of the other delegates.

'But, when I say "this *great* movement," I do not mean the mere destruction of the cursed machines that are robbing you and your children of bread. That is only our first aim, our first step to strike terror into the hearts of our oppressors. In all the years of my long life, I have seen the rich and the great trampling on the poor. I have seen men with hands

like lilies, who never did a day's work in their lives, dictating to the horny-handed sons of labour, and making laws to crush and enslave them. Is this sort of thing to continue? I say, Down with the aristocrats! For more than twenty years I have had my eyes opened to the iniquity of our rulers, and again I say, Down with the aristocrats!'

And then, with a voice tremulous with excitement, he went on with a passionate and revolutionary speech that seemed to electrify his hearers, and brought many of the younger men to their feet. But of those Luddites whose sole object was the destruction of machines to benefit hand labour, not a man stirred.

There was silence at its close. Some, who had been carried away by his eloquence, or held similar opinions, might have given them vent, but impatient Mellor sprang to his feet.

'The London aristocrats may bide. There is work nearer home to be done first. I know of no aristocrats who are bigger tyrants than our own masters, and I'm for dealing with them first. What we may do ultimately is for after consideration. When we have lit our first fire, the flames will spread.'

'Our brother is right,' said Wrigley, 'but only in a measure. He is right in his desire to strike down the tyrants who rob the labouring man of his daily bread, and turn him out to starve, whilst they fill their own coffers with the work of machines, but wrong in thinking they are his only oppressors. There are men basking in hereditary luxury, who never soiled their hands with trade, or saw a machine. Now that we have proved and know our strength, let us go down to the root. Throughout Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Lancashire, Derbyshire, and Cheshire, the Luddites are powerful. Brother Mellor is right in saying the flame will spread. It has already spread as far north as Paisley; and I venture to predict this is but the beginning. The masters are arming. Let them arm. We have thousands of arms collected, and brave men to use them. Since John Westley was shot, the feeling against the masters and their frames has grown in strength and bitterness. We learn the secrets of the soldiers and the special constables. We have set guards at doors dressed as soldiers, whilst our brothers have wrecked the frames within. Then, the frames are not always the property of the frame-workers, and we may break these with impunity. In such

cases resistance is a sham. We have the sympathy of the people, and visit our known enemies with vengeance swift and sure. Many in our body advise the shooting of such masters as openly oppose and persecute us. But—a'—and he spoke with a sort of amiable hesitation, belied by his cunning green eyes—'I hardly like the idea of murdering a man in cold blood, it is opposed to the nature of an Englishman;' but out of the corners of his eyes he slyly watched the impression he had made.

Here Mellor broke in impetuously, 'Let 'em do what's reight, then! If we're to turn squeamish an' stick at such nonsense, there will be nowt done. If they shoot at Luddites, why should not Luddites shoot at them? Theere are two men from Marsden and Liversedge bragging in Huddersfield market week after week, and threatening what they will do to us if we meddle with their machinery. They must be taken in hand one way or other sharp. We've sent warnings both to Horsley an' Wainwright, but they set us at defiance. Wainwright has a fighting parson at his elbow, a magistrate, and between them and busy Radcliffe of Huddersfield, they have filled the neighbourhood with soldiers. Wainwright talks of defending his mill. The braggart wants a lesson. We tried our strength on Bradley's big mill last week, but it was as full of soldiers as a barracks. Armitage of Wood-bottom is another who talks of arming in defence of his property; if he does, we shall have to give him a lesson too. I should not stick at tackling Radcliffe. It might stop the officious bounce of other magistrates. Do they think we are to be ruled by red-coats? If we cannot get rid of the machines, we must get rid of those who own the machines.'

'Ay, an' those who make the machines,' cried a big fellow whose name was Jonathan Dean, a cloth-dresser from Huddersfield. 'It's them Taylors as have browt things to this pass. I'm fur dealing with them, reight off.'

'Ay, ay,' was assented generally. 'Quite right,' agreed Wrigley. 'It's best to be prompt in dealing with such men. I am not myself an advocate for blood-shedding, but there are those in Nottingham who maintain that some diseases are only to be cured by blood-letting.' His voice had lost the gruffness of his boyhood, but in its wily suavity was far more dangerous and insidious. He could work others up to frenzy

without committing himself. It was his to pull the wires unseen. It was for his puppets to act.

'I'm for tackling Greenfolds first. We have a strong party round theere,' cried Thorpe.

'We's short of arms for that,' put in a cropper named Job Hey. 'It's no use going theere wi' nowt but hatchets an' hammers, unless we want to fail as we did at Bradley Mills last week. We mun ha' moore firearms to meet soldiers. Me an' my lot ha' not done mich o' late. Hartland's badly again.'

'Ill, or shamming?' questioned a delegate sternly.

'Nay, he's noan shamming; he looks badly enough. He's no wark, an' a poor sickly body for a wife, an' a lot o' bairns, one o' them a humpbacked cripple. I'se a notion theyn nowt mich to live on but th' wages th' biggest lass an' a little lad bring hoam from Dacre's mill. Sin' th' wife an' the lass found out he had joined us Luddites, theyn set theer faces agen it, though they're hauf-starved. An' I think Wainwright's business had best bide till we hev moore guns. We mun see about them to-neet.'

A tall fellow of herculean build then jumped to his feet. 'To my mind,' said he, 'we should begin with th' machine-makers, Enoch Taylor and his brother, of Marsden. We con tackle their friends Horsley an' Armitage after we'n settled them. They wur but blacksmiths twenty years ago, an' now they're machinists an' ironfounders, an' hev a big place wi' forges an' carpenters at work making fortunes for them, as well as th' iron devils as take out o' men's hands the work God set them to earn their own bread by. I say, deal first with the Taylors, an' you'll strike at the root. Next, with Horsley an' Armitage, who hev upheld the Taylors from the first.'

'It would be folly without firearms,' then put in Thorpe. 'The place is filled with soldiers.'

'Theere's a master nigher here might be tackled first. We hev all our plans laid to attack Rawdon Mills on the 24th,' interposed a delegate from Bradford, who had not previously spoken.

'There's one in Water Lane, Leeds, as should have a lesson reight off. We're ready to storm his place at once,' cried another.

'Then suppose we put off Wainwright's business until April 11th. We shall want all the help we can muster, for the place is strongly fortified. Can we depend on assistance from Wakefield, Leeds, or Bradford?' asked Mellor.

'Ay! ay!' proclaimed the delegates unanimously.

'Then,' replied Mellor, with prompt decision, 'we will muster where the roads meet, by the Dumb Steeple, at Cooper's Bridge, at eleven o'clock. We shall have arms by then.'

Mellor's plan for the attack was laid down, debated, and approved. The secretary made minutes in a cipher of his own.

Other delegates laid their proposals before the meeting, to be also debated and passed, and jotted down by the same facile pen.

Before the meeting dissolved, Wrigley came up to Mellor, as the General Ludd of the district, and observed—

'I approve your plans. Men who set us at defiance must be dealt with promptly. And if that man Hartland is shirking his duty, you know our law. The man who is not with us, is against us. And with regard to the proposed general rising, you will collect arms vigorously, and report to us.'

They shook hands and parted, as coolly as if they had not a spot of guilt or sin on their souls, and as if death, destruction, and general insurrection were their lawful playthings.

They were separating in the outer doorway, when Susan, who had been upon the watch, caught Mellor by the arm, and would have detained him.

'Yo're not goin' off, George, without a word, are yo? I'se been lookin' fur yo neet after neet, an' yo hev never come. It isna reight for a mon to sarve his sweetheart so,' and there was a smothered sob in the sound of the complaint.

'I cannot stop to-night, Susan. It is late, and I have business on hand that cannot be neglected for sweethearting. You must have patience.'

'I'se afraid, George,' she replied, with a mournful sigh, 'yo are after business that will bring you to a worse end than sweethearting with me. But goa yor own way. I'se ne'er seek yo out no moore. Yo're gettin' too big a mon

for Susan, but yo had better keep company wi' th' poor sarvant lass as loves yo true, than yon old Baines an' his lot. An' now, good-neet, and may God forgie ye!' and she was gone, lost in the obscurity of the dark passage.

'Hang it!' muttered the great General to himself, as he made his way towards Church Lane. 'Is there no shaking off that lass? Is a man to throw his life away on every servant wench who may chance to have waited on him when laid up? Sweethearting? What have I to do with such foolery? I have a sterner duty upon me. The wrongs of my suffering brethren to avenge. Better keep her company, indeed!' and he smiled grimly to himself.

But Susan spoke truly. It would have been far better for himself and for others.

CHAPTER XV.

UNCLE TOM.

STEALTHILY the meeting had assembled, as stealthily it dispersed. Far and wide were scattered the homes of the members. The night was dark, the town lit only with oil lamps and sparsely, honest people were, as a rule, abed, the very houses seemed to have closed their glassy eyes and gone to sleep. Diverse and devious were the ways trod by these men. There was small chance for the authorities, even then on the watch for a suspected Luddites' meeting-place, to track it home to the 'St. Crispin.'

Hill and Hey left early and together; they kept to the high road and walked on briskly, meeting only a stray horseman here and there, until they reached Elland's round-topped cross. There, at a gap between the houses, near the 'Saville Arms,' they struck off in a direct line for the moors, overleaping walls and fences and crossing cultivated enclosures with no respect to the rights or feelings of the owners.

In passing the ancient cross, they exchanged signs with two men seated like weary wayfarers on its steps, but no word was spoken, though the street was nearly deserted. When they were out of sight, the loiterers rose and followed at a distance, only to join company when clear of the houses.

'Is that thee, Hoyle?' asked Hey, as they came up.

'Ay, it's me. I'se brought Carter along. He's got a musket under his coat, and will take us wheere we can get boath guns and pistols.' Carter was a cotton-spinner from Greetland.

'All reight. But we're bahn to tak' Hartland along!' was the reply, with the addendum, 'I wish the moon didno shine so breet.'

He might have wished the man Carter had been left behind, had the light of prescience been his.

That night the Hartlands had all gone early to bed. Wat had been without work more than a fortnight. His implements lay together with painful precision on the clear board, with not a scrap of cloth to keep them company. There was not a rag in the whole house he had not repaired, for the sake of saving his wife and filling his own time. He had gone hither and thither for miles around in search of work, but either the people were too poor or too proud, or, since the attempt on Bradley Mills, had heard of him as a suspected Luddite, and he came home not only empty-handed, but with pockets and inside in the like condition. He tried his best to cultivate his land, but, in want of plants, or seed, or manure, he made but poor things of it. Sometimes Benjy, who had become adventurous with Curly and his cart, would take a mat or two to places such as Stainland or Dean Head for sale, and if he came back successful, would collect in his cart what dung he found by the way, but it was a small matter on a long-craving plot of ground. Hartland had never been properly strong since the attack on Pitts Moor, and now his oath preyed upon him, and brought him lower even than insufficient food. But he often said he had no appetite and could not eat, lest he should deprive his family of a morsel.

That day the news of John Greenwood's transportation had come upon them like a thunderclap. Marian had sat by the fire more than an hour as one stunned. Silas, crying for 'summat to eat,' was the first reminder of her maternal and domestic responsibilities. But the ordinary Saturday's mopping and scrubbing proved beyond her strength. She had to give up and take refuge in bed long before Lydia and Robby were expected home with their wages. And when they did come, Lydia bearing a bag of meal Josiah had carried to the gate for her, Hartland himself had gone to bed, saying he did not feel well. It might be that he feared their supper of pease-porridge would be too scant for all, and thought that he alone should suffer for the misfortune he had brought upon them. Marian, remembering the pease-porridge of her girlhood, had intro-

duced it as a change when milk and treacle grew too scarce to be taken with their oatmeal diet.

It was close upon midnight when Curly, roused from his dog-sleep on the hearth, gave a low growl, then, satisfied that footsteps were on the garden path, jumped to his feet with a loud bark that was not a welcome.

Curly never gave mouth without a cause. Thin-eared Benjy was awake almost as soon as the dog. He sat up in bed and listened. The light sleepers down-stairs were awake and whispering.

There was a low peculiar tapping on the door, which he knew.

No answer was given.

After a pause, between the spasmodic barks of Curly, there was a loud, imperative repetition of the peculiar knocking, as if from knuckles of cast iron, followed by the voices of two men.

He heard his mother rise and ask the men their business in a frightened tone, and then a gruff voice threatening with a coarse imprecation to dash the door in if not opened.

Curly drowned the low voices below, but he thought his father advised the opening of the door, for he heard the door unbarred, and the voices of the two men, one mild and quiet, the other coarse and offensive, as was his very tramp upon the floor.

There was a peremptory demand for his father to accompany them at once, and a sobbing remonstrance from his mother, who pleaded her husband's ill health.

The milder man (Job Hey) spoke of some meeting that night his father should have attended, and of some command of the General, and then the rough, brutal voice of Hill, struck in with 'Arms we want, and arms we'll have; an' we command thee *on thy oath* to go with us and help to take them.'

Then his mother almost shrieked out, 'Tak' them? Bid Wat tak' owt that's not his own! Him as wouldn't touch th' money left i' th' bank he mowt fairly ha' claimed!'

'Hush, Marian! That is Tom's. Do let me go quietly,' said her husband mournfully,

'Thou shouldno goo if I could help it!' she cried in the same anguish-strung pitch.

'Silence, woman! We're not thieves; we want nowt but arms,' roared the rough brute, adding something which seemed

to strike fire out of the quiescent flint. Benjy fancied his father had made a rush at the bully, for there were sounds of a scuffle, and of some one endeavouring to hold him back and to pacify both, and it seemed as if Curly had interfered, and got a kick for his pains, by the yelp he made.

In the commotion, Benjy must have lost some argument intended to convince his mother. He only heard her reply, as if torn from her in a frenzied shriek, 'Ay, better a thousand times a poorhouse than a prison!' and then a low wail, a gurgling sob, a sharp exclamation from the men, and a sudden hush.

There was a drag as of helpless feet along the floor, a creaking of the rickety press-bed. The boy slid from his own, and grasped his clothes, as his father came to the stair-foot, calling 'Lydia!' in a tone of the deepest distress.

Before Benjy could reach the open doorway, Lydia was flying past him in the dark; and as he hurried on his clothes by the low window, footsteps on the stony path, and the quiet closing of the door, arrested his attention. He could just discern three dark figures holding a conference a yard or two away, and two others at the gate.

With a great throb of pain at his heart, for he knew one must be his father, and he was surely bent on some desperate enterprise, he drew the rag stuffing from a broken pane and placed his ear against it.

The window was low, so were the voices of the speakers, who, from the pointing of their arms, first in one direction, then in another, were evidently laying down their plans for the night's raid, of which he could make little or nothing.

All at once his father recoiled, as if smitten by a heavy blow, and cried out in dismay, 'What? Greenfolds Mill to be attacked? Yo cannot mean it!'

'We dun mean it, an' a good job too! An' if thou shows th' white feather, thou mun tak' th' consequences,' angrily retorted the rougher man. 'So coom along an' do thy part like a mon.'

He was called from the window by the sharp call of Lydia—'Benjy, quick! come here! I caunt rouse mother. Wheere's th' drops?'

By the flickering light of a bit of candle (merely the peeled pith of a rush dipped in tallow) he saw his sister, where she

had flung herself, on her knees by the bedside, vainly endeavouring to restore her swooning mother with passionate tears and kisses and hurried chafing of her hands, afraid at first to alarm her sleeping brothers.

Benjy's swift appearance was a relief to her, as any one who has been left alone with one beloved and insensible may know.

It was with a deep and bitter sorrow at their hearts, and a dread of some great trouble yet unknown, that these two young things set about the restoration of a mother dearly loved, following old Dr. Hebblethwaite's instructions as they best could, but it was long before the chafing of the cold hands, or the drops so slowly absorbed, made any perceptible change. Benjy, kneeling on the bed, and Lydia, standing on the other side, looked up at each other more than once; a terrible fear had possession of their hearts, and they held their own breaths to listen for the pulse that beat so feebly. The light was dying, and they thought that she was dying too.

'Benjy, we shall be in the dark,' whispered the girl. 'Can you find another bit of candle anywheere?'

'I'll see!' and scrambling off the bed, after some rummaging, another bit was found and set alight, to the infinite relief of both. They had no natural dread of the dark. It was the eclipse of the mother's light made the threatened darkness something to dread.

As if the renewed light were typical, there was a quiver and a change in the thin wan face, and, to the joy of the young watchers, animation slowly returned.

All the while, Curly, limping from the brutal kick, had strayed to and from the door, then rested his brown head on the bed-foot, as if anxious and troubled by the unwonted proceedings.

In whispers Lydia had confided to Benjy her fears about her father, and his connection with 'those dreadful Luddites,' and he in turn repeated what he had overheard.

But could either have seen the three men joined by others, and hurrying from one solitary house to another, startling the inmates out of their sleep, and forcing from them arms, ammunition, money, they would have covered their eyes and shrieked aloud with horror.

They thought their mother's mind was wandering, as they

heard her murmuring, 'Plenty of money. Ay, theere's plenty o' money in th' bank. Too honest to tak' what's his own, an' yet—Oh, my God!'

But she was not wandering. Near as they had been to starvation, her husband would not hear a word of touching that.

'Let me be honest while I can,' he had said. 'If I hev been trapped into wickedness and ruin by them Luddites, don't thou, Marian, tempt me to tak' Tom's money, now we knaw that he's alive to claim it.

But, honest though she was, that untouched store, for which the soldier did not seem to care, haunted her in their poverty, and Job Hey had, in a speech on the plenty of the rich, awakened slumbering echoes in her breast, and added poignancy to her reflections.

There was no more bed for Lydia that night, weary as she was, though she sent Benjy back to his. She did her best to soothe and comfort her poor mother, but forbore to say a word of the intended attack on Greenfolds, lest she should add to her distress.

In order to keep awake, and watch her mother at the same time, she rekindled the fire, and bestirred herself to clean up the place, which spoke with many tongues of a sick housewife and a dire struggle with poverty.

Then she found clothes, washed early in the week, still in the rough, and set about sprinkling and ironing them, now and again exchanging a word with her mother. At last she saw the sad eyes close in sleep, just as the grey fringe of night's black mantle gave a promise of dawn.

She had gone about her work with the quiet resolution of one whose mind was too agitated for repose, and to whom bodily exertion was a sort of safety-valve for emotion. Many things were troubling her besides her mother's condition.

There was her father's dreadful errand and prolonged absence to fill her with alarm. John Booth had not been at their meeting-place to come home with her that night as usual; several times latterly he had disappointed her, and it seemed as if it was always on those nights when her father was away. Then, since she had engaged herself to John, Josiah had seemed to grow reserved and distant, though ready as ever to do her brotherly service. The mill girls had long flung

her 'two sweethearts' in her teeth, but they had begun to throw out hints about her 'fine parson's son' being 'no better than other folk,' bidding her 'look afore she leaped, or she might land in the ditch,' until her mind was in a thorough toss and tumble about him. Upon all this the news of her Uncle John's transportation had come, suggesting the need for her to break her engagement, lest she should bring disgrace on Booth, and the possibility that he too had heard, and so held aloof from them. And another problem was then seething in her young brain—whether it would not be as wicked to let their good friend at Greenfolds be attacked without warning, as to take part in the attack.

Her father was still away when she quietly stole up-stairs to waken Benjy.

She found the boy already awake, turning over the same problem in his mind, as his first low question told.

'How far is it to Greenfolds, Lyd?'

'Ten mile or moore.'

'Oh, dear! Curly couldno take me as far as that;' and the lad sighed at his own incompetence.

She answered as if she knew all his mind. 'No, Benjy! I've a better plan than that. We mun say nowt to mother or faither, lest we get them into trouble wi' them Ludds; they'd as soon shoot faither as owt. An' it would not do for us to goa. But them Wainreets hev been good to us, an' it would be a sin to let them be set upon if we can help it. Dun yo think yo could mannish to write a few words anyhow to warn Mary's maister, an' I'd slip it in the post office at th' nooninscaup? Any sort o' writing will do. But thou mun put no name to it.'

'I'll try,' said Benjy. 'I've got the new pen 'Siah brought. I can write on a leaf of my copy-book, if yo'll tell me what to say, an' find a wafer.'

Three days later Mr. Wainwright received an unpaid, strange-looking communication, on blue ruled paper, evidently from one imperfectly skilled in the use of the pen.

He took it up with a preoccupied air. He had an anxious expression, the jaded appearance of one whose rest was disturbed by evil dreams or false alarms. Only the week before, a cartload of shears returning to his mill from the grinding had been stopped on the highway, broken up, and the driver

maltreated, by a gang of ruffians masked and disguised, of whom no trace could be found. For weeks he had been on guard over his mill. The long watchfulness was telling on his temper, but the necessity was hardening him to stone.

He had had many such scrawls, and was about to toss it into the fire unread, with the contemptuous words, 'Another Luddite threat!' but something in the crude superscription and the ruled paper stayed his hand, and he tore it open. It ran thus,—and the orthography was scarcely better than the round text caligraphy—

'*Please, sir, this is to let you know theere's going to be a wicked attackt on your mill very soon.*'

'Ah,' muttered he, 'this differs! neither coffin nor cross-bones here. It seems friendly. Well, the sooner the better, if it must be. This watching and waiting drags the heart out of a man. How my poor wife bears up perplexes me, left alone in this great lone house at night, with only strange soldiers to guard it, and me sleeping away in the mill. But she has a brave heart, has Kate, God bless her! She is a wife in a thousand. And a man needs a good wife in times like these. Thank God! I'm prepared. Thanks to Marston's skill in fortification, the ruffians will have a warm reception if they attempt to storm the fortress. I'll ride over to the Rectory and ask what Marston thinks of this warning.'

He was not afraid of any personal attack on himself or his mill by daylight, and had all a brave man's contempt for men who committed cowardly outrages under cover of darkness. And it had not been until the attack on Bradley's mill in Huddersfield that he felt his own property in actual danger.

Thanks to that active magistrate, Mr. Joseph Radcliffe, of Huddersfield, he and others also had soldiers on guard in his house and in his mill, soldiers changed at intervals to prevent collusion with discontented work-people outside; and whilst her master was riding off to consult with the martial clergyman, Mary Hartland, rosier, plumper, and better dressed than of old, burst into the kitchen with her face all aglow, and the little ones at her heels.

'Hegh, Janet! what dun yo think? One o' them new sowdgers is my Uncle Tom, as I never saw afore. He 'listed afore faither wur wed, an' hes ne'er been hoam since. He

never got faither's letter about gronfaither's death an' th' money in th' bank.'

'How came yo to discover he was yor Uncle Tom?' asked Janet in a dubious tone.

'Why, I saw him staring hard at me, an' I axed him what he wur staring at. An' then he said I wur like some one he knew when he wur a lad. An' then he axed me my name, an' wheere I come from, an' my faither's name; an' then he said I wur like his owd mother, an' asked if I'd never heered tell on Uncle Tom. An' when I telled him gronfaither an' granny wur boath dead, if he didno cry like a babby!'

'Sarve him reight if he ran away from hoam to go sowdgering. I dunnot see mich use on sowdgers mysen.'

'Con yo write?' asked Mary, who by that time had the big baby in her arms, and was looking serious. 'I'd like to let faither knaw.'

'Hegh, no, lass! An' I ne'er had any call to write. A' my folk wur born an' died i' Liversedge. Caunt yor uncle write?'

'No,' replied Mary gravely, 'nor faither, nor none on 'em, now Davy's gone away. I wish I could.'

'Happen mistress would if yo axed her,' suggested Janet.

'I don't like,' said Mary shyly. 'Will yo, Janet?'

'Get out o' my way, lass, now, and I'll see,' was the answer; and Mary skipped back, with the child also skipping joyfully by her hand, to tell her newly-found soldier uncle that perhaps her mistress would write a letter for them.

BOOK THE THIRD

CHAPTER I.

THE NIGHT OF THE PLAY.

ORN, haggard, jaded, and shame-stricken was Walter Hartland, when at the first peep of dawn he had staggered rather than walked up to his own door, and, discovering that his wife was asleep, flung himself at length on the hard settle, to take what repose exhausted nature and an uneasy conscience could agree to give him.

No one there rose early on the Sunday morning; at least there was no scuffling up at four o'clock. It was the only day the poor children of toil could feel the blessedness of bed to weary limbs.

That special Sunday morning, whilst the miserable Luddite lay undisturbed on his oaken couch, having dropped exhausted on the settle, two anti-Luddites in the bare attic above had concocted the brief warning to the threatened cloth-finisher. It was a long business, many versions being draughted slowly out on Benjy's slate besides the one finally copied on paper, and secured with a bit of his father's beeswax for lack of a wafer.

Indeed, it was almost time to prepare their frugal breakfast when Lydia thrust it into her pocket for transfer to the post.

Whatever the weather, wet or fine, it had been Josiah's custom to call at Side-o'-Beck and accompany the Hartlands

to Stainland Church on a Sabbath morning, as he had done during the seven years of his early apprenticeship. For a long while he had shared with the father the task of shouldering poor little Benjy's light form, until the deformed lad's own thin misshapen legs grew strong enough to cover the half-mile or so of indistinct path.

This custom had been almost broken up by John Booth's confidential disclosure regarding his relations to Lydia. Setting aside his own pain, Josiah could not face Mrs. Hartland Sunday by Sunday without feeling the weight of 'responsibility' she had laid upon him, and of the oppressive secret he neither felt altogether justified in keeping nor revealing. The ache on his own score was as keen away as there.

Conscience-smitten Walter felt confident in his own mind that straightforward Josiah was shunning him as a suspected Luddite, and he writhed under the conviction; nay, Marian herself felt as if the leprosy of Luddism clung to them and had driven their truest friend away. The transportation of her brother, the midnight mystery of her husband's doings haunted her, and what *she* knew, she fancied must be known to all the world.

That Sunday, however, Josiah, to their surprise and the joy of Benjy, was amongst them again. He had had a letter from David, and, as was his wont, came to share the news with them. Good part of the sheet was occupied with a description of two days' rioting at Middleton, about four miles north of Manchester, where a mob of wretched and famishing hand-loom weavers and others attacked the well-defended power-loom factory of Messrs. Burton, and being repulsed with wounds and loss of life, in their rage and fury returned the following day formidably armed with guns, scythes, flails, swords, pitchforks, crowbars. Then they not only made for the mill, meantime garrisoned by militia, but in their exasperation sacked the cottages and houses of the workmen who had served their good masters in defence the previous day. Women and children might shriek, but Mob was master, or thought so. Into one huge bonfire went the furniture and effects alike of clerks and weavers; and finally they gave to the flames the abandoned mansion of the chief partner, with all its valuable contents, trampling down gardens and ornamental grounds into a hideous waste. The contest

ended in the arrival of troops, more bloodshed, a number of prisoners, and the deaths of two mere onlookers from stray shots.

David told at length and with detail what I have here condensed, saying he had it all from one who was present, and had had to run for it. Then, after an expression of horror at the fearful waste of human life, and of lamentation over the famine out of which it had originated, he went on to say that he was going to see Charles Smithson play Othello in their club-room at the 'Cotton Tree' on the Saturday night, and would write home on the Sunday and tell them what a play was like. He was becoming quite a scribe.

Hartland, unwashed, unshaven, haggard, and feverish, hung down his head, and sat with his gaunt wasted hands clasped between his bony knees, silent and soul-smitten.

Marian shook and shivered at the horrors of the scene described, and the woeful sacrifice of human life.

'Hegh!' she cried, clasping her thin hands. 'Poor deluded souls! an' not one o' them dead bodies as wonna be weshed wi' some one's tears! An' them poor working folk as had theer bits o' things brokken an' brunt! God help them! If they did arn a living tending machines, it wasno fur other working folk to rob an' ruin *them*. I'm thankful Davy's out o' th' way o' such.'

Then, as she had never heard of 'Nero fiddling whilst Rome was burning,' the grim tag of amateur acting did not strike her in its irrelevance.

'When was that play-acting to be?' she asked Josiah.

'It would be last neet,' he replied.

'Last neet? Last neet?' she echoed, a strange spasm as of pain contracting her white face.

Hartland rose and walked moodily into the back kitchen.

'Yes,' added Josiah; 'and if he writes to-day, you will have a letter on Wednesday morning. I found this one at home last night.'

There was startling news of another kind flying all over moor and moss, town and village, on that Wednesday, March the 25th, but David's promised letter came not, though weeks and months went by, and the mother sickened and pined for intelligence of her first-born.

If rumour had anyway reached Josiah, he pitifully kept it

from her, not caring to add to the burden she seemed too frail to bear. Besides, he had his own weight of sorrow to sustain. His own brothers, not less than David or Lydia, were heavily on his mind.

On that eventful Saturday night, Joel Sladen, the thick-set, zealous, active, intelligent servant of the Manchester borough-reeve, who had spies here, there, and everywhere, to invent what they wanted to discover, surrounded the 'Cotton Tree' in Ancoats Lane with his myrmidons, and boldly took possession of the amateurs' club-room, with all its properties, actors and auditors included, as Luddite conspirators; replying to reason and remonstrance with brutal curtness characteristic of the man. (In afterlife he was chief proprietor of a theatre in the town, and witnessed many a play from his private box, where he was wont to stand up displaying his portly form in a drab topcoat, as if to say, 'Behold me! I am here, the great Sladen, master of my masters.')

Whilst Walter Hartland was being compelled on the very strength of his unnatural oath to join in a midnight raid from which his whole nature revolted, his unoffending son, so very soon in the dreaded 'clutches' of Sladen, was being driven through the busiest streets of the busy town, on the busiest night of the week, with thirty-seven companions in misfortune, handcuffed together four abreast like criminals, and guarded not merely by the deputy-constable and his men, but by a posse of the new Watch and Ward, a sort of special constabulary raised up from the loyal inhabitants to meet the exigencies of the time. It was all a tangle and a bewilderment to David, who had gone with Peter Toft merely as a spectator, and could not understand on what grounds he had been included with the rest, supposing there chanced to be a secret Luddite in the assembly. His innocence was scarcely a support to him, whilst people closing their shops or returning from market with empty carts or laden baskets, and factory lads rejoicing in a night's liberty, and dancing the clog hornpipe on cellar traps, stopped to stare at the 'desperate gang,' as rays from the oil-lit street-lamps fell upon their young faces, dismayed, indignant, anxious, terrified, as the case might be.

Smithson carried a bold front, and bade the others not to be alarmed, but his blackened face, and the ruddle upon

others, with their fanciful attempts at character costume, the property swords impounded by the constables, were all evidence to the crowd of disguise and preparations for some deadly deed to outrival the 'Middleton fight.' Lads followed, shouting derisively, 'Luddites! Luddites!' and in many cases got their ears boxed for their pains, by hands more in sympathy with the prisoners than their captors, even supposing them the conspirators they were *not*.

In this way, the crowd growing and gathering as they went, now alongside, now ahead and in the rear, just as the thoroughfares happened to be wide as in Oldham Street, or cramped as in old Market Street Lane and Deansgate, were they marched right across the town, and over the New Bridge spanning the river Irwell to the New Bailey Prison, built after a model supplied by John Howard in the form of a cross, but even then (owing as much to Sladen's 'vigilance' as to the depravity of the times) requiring enlargement.

The house of the governor (Mr. Dunstan), the sessions house, and the offices of the stipendiary-magistrate occupied a massive square block of buildings apart and fronting the river, the entrance for prisoners being through a strongly-barred iron gateway.

Here, in the absence of Mr. Evans, the stipendiary-magistrate, who had waited for this very batch of prisoners far beyond the limits of his time or his patience, the whole thirty-eight were handed over to Mr. Dunstan and his gaolers, who were at a loss where to dispose of them.

It was a model prison as times went. Except in rare cases, prisoners were not fettered with leg-irons as elsewhere, and it was neither foul nor fœtid.

But Sladen's hint that these men were 'dangerous' and 'desperate' caused a stricter guard and discipline than ordinary, and their handcuffs were not removed.

Monday morning brought the magistrates, but not the release they expected. Friends had flocked thither with testimony to satisfy any reasonable judges, and Smithson, as spokesman for the rest, laid the injustice of their arrest clearly before them.

The evidence of Sladen and his two spies, Oliver and Edwards, outweighed the protest of the suspected leader, and they were one and all committed for trial at Lancaster.

David's heart had sunk within him when he passed through the yawning portals on their entrance, and saw symbolic fetters hung around, enough to cow the stoutest heart. But when the turnkey and his assistants claimed him and his associates as their property, and arrayed them in the blue and red livery of 'suspects,' he covered his face with his hands and wept aloud. 'Oh, my poor mother!' was his cry; 'this will kill her!'

Before the week was out these vigilantly-watched 'desperadoes' (whose attempted rescue was hourly expected by the alarmed authorities) were huddled and chained together in waggons for transport to the assize town, along with criminals of the most brutal type, attended by a guard of troops in case of attempted rescue.

It so happened that Smithson and David were linked to each other, and the former, clear of head and not easily discouraged, did much to cheer the drooping courage of the lad.

'I've a mother in Yorksheer as will be frettin' for a letter I was to send. An' she'll break her heart when she hears I'm sent to gaol.'

'Nay, nay, lad, not so bad as that. I've left both a mother and a sweetheart to fret after me. But I don't mean to give in, and I don't mean to let any of you lads be convicted if there's either law or justice in the land.'

'Where are they taking us?'

'To Lancaster Castle.'

'A castle? Is it far?'

'About fifty mile.'

'Fifty mile?' The lad's face lengthened. 'Fifty mile, chained up like cattle this way! I'm stiff and sore in all my bones, and have not room to stir an inch. And how the folk stare! I hope they'll stop soon.'

Fifty miles of dreary road, with drearier thought, and limbs all in a tingle for want of room and motion; with no stoppages, except for change of horses, and the handing round of coarse prison fare, to be eaten where they sat. David, and not David alone, felt as if God had forsaken him, and life was exceptionally hard. Now and again he nodded from very weariness, only to be roughly wakened by the strain of his own weight on his bonds, until he groaned aloud in his pain

and misery, and fancied he could have borne it better had he deserved such fate.

It was a relief to him when the roadside milestones told that Lancaster was near; and soon after crossing the canal bridge into the grim old town, when the horses strained to drag their heavy loads up the cramped and steep ascent to the turreted gateway of the frowning castle, he hailed the end of his journey as a coming deliverance from present suffering.

When the waggons drew up in the great courtyard, shut in by heavy buildings, few of the compulsory travellers were able to obey the order to alight, and to stand was almost as impossible.

David thought they had been hardly used in the New Bailey, when three of them were temporarily thrust into a cell built and arranged to accommodate two, and where the keen March wind and showers driving through the grating could only be kept out by a shutter and consequent darkness. But everything there was scrupulously clean, and a warder seated at the centre of the cross was on the watch night and day for the little telegraphic tablets shooting out from any cell in the four corridors to tell of aught amiss or wanted.

He very speedily began to wish himself back, so utterly wretched was the lot of prisoners then in that grim old fortress of the Dukes of Lancaster. There was no privacy, and those who had no friends to send them money had their lines cast in anything but pleasant places. And there, among rogues and vagabonds, coarse, filthy, and abandoned, were these thirty-eight men, chiefly young fellows, guilty of no offence against manners or morals, condemned to remain until the next assizes should determine their fate; men with no rich friends to hunt up evidence or fee counsel on their behalf.

Poor David! He was worst off of any. His friends had no means to help; and he shrank with shame and dread from publishing his disgrace to them in any case. Smithson offered him a sheet of paper to write home.

'You're very kind,' said he mournfully, 'but if I cannot send good news, I'll not send bad.' And so the poor mother pined and fretted for the news that did not come,

and began to fear she should never see her dearly beloved son again.

Before David and his colleagues had been shifted from that early model prison on the banks of the Irwell, there were news ringing through the West Riding that spread like wildfire, setting ears tingling and hearts beating wildly, some with fright, some with fiendish glee.

About six or eight miles north of Bradford, Rawdon Mill stood, as many of the mills did, a solitary mark in a depression of the open moorland, with only a few scattered cottages for work-people anywhere near. The owner had supplied his mills with the new machinery, but, not having dealt unkindly with his work-people, had felt no alarm, and taken no special precautions.

In the dead hours of the night, when the eyes of babes and men should be sealed in sleep, a band of men, with blackened faces and disguises most grotesque, who had come together how or whence was scarcely known to one or other, were marshalled by a leader on the adjoining moor. Guards, well armed, were told off to stand at every cottage door and keep the inmates safe, 'in the name of General Ludd.'

The two sleepy watchmen at the factory yard gates were surprised and silenced by the touch of a cold pistol barrel at their temples. Doors and windows were splintered, then hatchets and hammers made havoc with the new machinery. The leathern driving-bands were cut and hacked; the cloth for the Huddersfield and Halifax markets was riven to shreds; and not content with that, flooring was ripped up, window frames and walls battered down. When the sun rose on the 24th, Rawdon Mill was demolished, and of the miscreants who did the deed of darkness no more was seen than of the whirlwind that comes unseen and so departs, leaving wreck and destruction in its path.

It was the initial blow among the cloth-workers, and its significance was commensurate.

CHAPTER II.

AT THE DUMB STEEPLE.

LIKE to the kindling of a beacon fire on some hill-top, so was the demolition of Rawdon Mill to the fiery spirit of the Yorkshire croppers. Like blood-hounds held in a restraining leash, they broke loose at the signal, and their great hammer, dubbed 'Enoch' in derision, and wielded by a man of powerful thews and sinews, named Jonathan Dean, was here, there, and everywhere, crushing to atoms the delicate machinery Enoch Taylor and his brother had made. 'What Enoch Taylor made, our Enoch will shatter,' was the exulting cry of General Ludd, as he marshalled his men and led them to ravage and destroy. Undefended mills in secluded spots were broken into and left in ruins. Now and then a fire was kindled, but not often, and then only in low-lying, secluded spots, since fire might serve as a beacon to bring the military down upon them, an end not desirable now that frame-breaking was felony punishable by death, as arson had been heretofore. These midnight marauders were not so heroic as to rush to their own destruction wilfully, though some of them were woefully blind.

Timid people out on their own business, meeting armed bodies of men, slunk into concealment until they had passed. Some discreetly held their peace, others rushed to sleepless Mr. Radcliffe, or to the temporary barracks, and gave the alarm.

'Fools!' cried George Mellor, with a grim curl of the lip, as

the approach of a galloping troop of soldiers, heralded by the tramp of hoofs, the clank of bits and sabretaches, gave the signal to disperse, only to reassemble when the horsemen had passed or gone astray. 'Fools! They might as well send a bellman before them to announce their coming. We can hear them a mile off, and hide where no horse could follow. I'm moore afraid of my men coming singly across that confounded Watch and Ward Radcliffe has set up to scour the town and country. Men born and bred on the spot know every nook and turn, and they know the men they meet too. But they're a noisy lot, and a fellow with any wit may give them the slip when he sees their lanthorn ahead. If they want to catch us, they must be as secret, as silent, and as sure as we are.'

At all events, three hundred Luddites marched from different quarters towards Wakefield on the 9th in regular squads; hatchetmen, hammermen, pistollers, gunners, with a guard in front and rear carrying drawn swords, and commanded by a black-faced, fiery-eyed General, armed with a peculiar pistol having a gleaming barrel more than a foot long. They were met by several wayfarers, but no one seemed to have the temerity to stop or thwart them, no one seemed to have the intelligence or the will to alarm the authorities; perhaps we should add—or the daring.

Their destination was not Wakefield. A contingent from that town met the main body on Horbury Bridge, about four miles south-west of Wakefield. The leaders exchanged a few words. The new-comers, well armed and disguised, fell in with the rest, and marched on through the village boldly to the Horbury Mills, built on a hilly slope, where a dam had been thrown across a stream to supply power for the mill.

The two sons of Mr. Foster, the owner, occupied a house in the vicinity of the mill.

In the dead of the night they were aroused from sleep by a confused sound without, the thud as of a heavy hammer on the outer door, the tramp of heavy feet upon the stairs, and, before either could do more than thrust his limbs into his nether garments, they were surrounded by dark figures, held fast by strong, rough hands, tied down in stout chairs with their own bell-ropes, and placed in front of their own windows,

to witness what General Ludd and his followers were about.

What availed resistance in such hands, when gleaming pistol barrels touched their brows, and they had evidence before them what they might expect?

Hundreds of such black figures swarmed around their father's mill; there was a crashing as of wood and iron under the strokes of hammers by the score; then every window of the mill was alight; it was ablaze; the stifling smell of singeing wool mingled with the fumes of burning oil and wood; glass melted, blue and crimson flames leaped forth, licking and biting the very stone; the roof fell in, the sparks flew, flame and smoke commingling writhed and twisted, and with a rush and roar the fire waved its red banners high in air for all the country round to see.

Was there no one to spread the alarm? Were there no work-people to oppose these men and throw water on the flames? Was there no one to appease the agony of the young fellows compelled to witness the appalling outrage, by showing an interest in the preservation of their father's mill?

The alarm had been given. The work-people, roused from their beds, were there, spectators only. Not a voice was raised in protest, not a foot or hand stirred to bring so much as a bucket of water. A few women stood aloof wringing their hands, and that was all.

It could not be that the men they employed would wantonly consent to be thus thrown out of work, the young masters argued.

They little knew how men were entrapped as Luddite recruits, or the nature of the oath that enslaved free will. In their own persons they could testify what force and armed numbers could effect.

In vain they groaned aloud, and struggled against their bonds, as they saw with a crash the roof fall in, and for an instant a dense smothering cloud hang over like a pall. Then, as from the crater of a new volcano, there was an upward rush of sparks, of burning rags and brands, to fall in fiery shower upon the lands around for more than half a mile. Had the cottages near been roofed with thatch instead of flagstone, the village would have gone down along with the mill.

The falling in of the roof appeared the signal for retreat. A shot was fired from the brass-mounted pistol of their leader.

Without clamour, without disturbance beyond a parting shout of triumph, the men fell in and marched from the scene of destruction as if they had done a glorious deed, and not one of the stunned and helpless crowd they had robbed of a livelihood dared follow to see whither they went.

All trace of them was lost when the two young masters were released by trembling servants, and freed to arouse magistrates and military.

They had retreated, but not dispersed. There was other work before them, and they were in the excited mood to do their resistless leader's bidding without cavil.

In the morning light there was a terrible record of devastated mills and property destroyed. And if Hartland and a few more having sensitive natures hung back from the holocaust, yet crept to their homes like criminals, self-condemned, there were others who found a fiendish joy in outrage and destruction, and called their hideous work 'retribution.'

George Mellor and his immediate colleagues went back to their different cropping shops and daily work flushed with triumph, and deeming themselves invincible in the terror inspired by the very name of General Ludd. To him the sense of dominant power was intoxicant. He had an army of bond slaves at his beck. He who had been kicked and beaten in his boyhood held the lives and fortunes of the West Riding at his disposal. The whole world would speedily ring with his name as the liberator of his fellows, the destroyer of upstart tyrants. In his confidence, caution was forgotten.

'Hegh, George! wheere did'st get that fine pistol o' thine?' inquired Sowden the next morning, when, before the news spread, he came upon the other cleaning the lock and fluted barrel. At that time there were neither revolvers, nor percussion caps, nor cartridges; all guns and pistols were fitted with small bits of flint, out of which flew a spark to the gunpowder, when the trigger was pulled, and brought the steel hammer down upon the firestone at the right angle. The art of killing had not been elevated to a science in the early years of this century. It has made gigantic strides since then, and won golden honours, rarely bestowed on the nobler art of healing. Possibly the heads of nations think it is nobler to

kill than to cure. The Luddites arrived at the notion that to kill was to cure; to kill masters was to cure distress!

'Where did I get it? Why, I bought it from a Rooshian when I was away on my travels. I call it "Peter the Great." Now, Sowden, lay that stock down!' he added, seeing the long, thin cropper closely examining the curious workmanship of the brass-mounted stock.

'Ay, ay,' replied Sowden, obediently laying it down tenderly, as if there had been danger in the wood. 'It's a rare piece o' wark; I reckon theere's ne'er another like it in all Yorksheer. I'd knaw it annywheeres. But, I saay, that name thou's gien it ne'er cam out o' thy own head, I knaw.'

'No! John Booth found the name. A conqueror and a Rooshian, he said it was.'

'Ay,' replied Sowden, who, being a steady sort of man, kept much at home by his wife, had contrived to read a bit now and again. 'A masterful man, Peter the Great; mich like thee, George. He could conquer an' govern others, but not himsen.' And having by this time stripped off his old coat and rolled up his shirt sleeves, he turned to his work fresher than others, who came in as wearily as if they had been at work the night through, as no doubt they had.

They were all in high glee, however, as over the performance of some great feat, and the looking forward to a still greater achievement close at hand. They talked of the victories of Luddism over wrong and tyranny, and of masters, out of very dread of General Ludd, returning to the old system of hand-cropping, as proof of the good they wrought. And as excited strangers hurried in to tell John Wood or his men the direful news of the night's dark doings, Sowden pressed his thin lips close, and looked askance at Mellor, as if he was aware of more than it was prudent to reveal.

Hitherto the Ludds had pursued their career unchecked. They had yet to learn what was meant by disaster and repulse.

The mysterious messenger from the head centre in Halifax had been busy of late; travelling hither and thither with a well-filled wallet over his shoulder, which, like Æsop's basket of bread, seemed to lighten at every call he made in country or in town.

On the morning of Saturday the 11th, he took his way

at an early hour to Mr. John Wood's, passed through the cropping shop, followed by the furtive eyes of Sowden, and so on to a quiet room, where, as before, George Mellor was found at work alone. The wallet was here considerably lightened of its heavy contents; and George Mellor stowed away in a private press a fair supply of powder and bullets; and then the man went his way, to distribute the remainder elsewhere, with messages to enforce attendance at the gathering that night.

As he went out, Sowden muttered to himself, 'I thowt I'd seen yon queer chap afore. I knaw now he's th' mon they called Dickenson, as came here last year wi' Jonathan Dean, telling the lads all the frame-breaking doings in Nottinghamsheer, an' putting them up to the same soart of devilry. I'd best say nowt, but I'se sure he's been here fur noa guid now.'

Sowden's conclusions were right. His chicken-hearted reticence alone was in fault.

About four miles from Huddersfield on the north-east, by Cooper's Bridge, where the high-road is met by others from Leeds, Wakefield, and Halifax, stands an ancient obelisk as a landmark for travellers which is known as the *Dumb Steeple*. It bears no inscription, and its origin is lost in the mists of time. It rises foursquare from a broad base, like an outlying step, and at a distance does bear some resemblance to a steeple or belfry. Yet it is merely a solid block of masonry about twenty-four or twenty-five feet high, narrowing again to its apex, where it is surmounted by a stone ball, and bears no mark or token of former aperture for the admission of a bell. And no doubt some unremembered wag, in mockery of its delusive promise, stood sponsor for the singular name it bears.

Here, in an open corner of Kirklees Park, the Ludds had frequently gathered for drill; drill that was to culminate in that night's victory, when one strong will was to be pitted against another equally as strong.

It was a spot well chosen. It was secluded from observation. The 'Three Nuns Inn' was close at hand, and patriotism is thirsty. Then the meeting highways had byeways and branches straggling up hillsides, or diving down hollows to smaller towns and villages, and, close by, the Colne and the Huddersfield canal lost themselves in the serpentine Calder,

all bridged for traffic. And that memorable night, by every avenue, came single men or groups, under the starlight, to that well-known rendezvous by the old monument, much as their Nottingham *confrères* met by the twin obelisks in Sherwood Forest.

But of those who gathered beneath its long shadow that night, was there more than one of that grotesquely-disguised assembly who called it otherwise than the vernacular 'Doom Steeple'? or did that one for a single instant think that the shadow it cast was as a finger of *doom?*

From nine o'clock until close upon midnight did that motley group of desperate men come dropping in, alone, or in groups that had overtaken each other on the roads. Some wore women's gowns and bonnets, some carters' or plowmen's smocks, others, of whom was Hartland, had simply turned their coats inside out, but all had blackened or otherwise disguised their faces, albeit with only a handkerchief brought well over the upper lip. Their arms were as various. Guns and pistols that had done better service, axes that might have felled oaks or oxen, hammers that only a smith could wield, bludgeons cut from thorn or hazel, iron bars wrenched from palisades, and one sword. A fatal sword for its owner.

Hartland was on the ground only a little in advance of Mellor and his young lieutenant Booth, whose lips kept up an incessant twitching. The latter had arrayed himself without leave in a gown belonging to Mrs. Wright's maid; the other in a greasy smockfrock, under which the Russian pistol lay perdu.

They had followed Hartland for some distance, and might have overtaken him had they been so willed, he walked so slowly and languidly.

George Mellor had observed it with flashing eyes.

'Yon chap does not seem to carry much goodwill in his shoes. He will have to be brought to account shortly, I've a notion,' was his stern remark.

'Not so,' replied Booth. 'It's poor Hartland; he's getting very thin and feeble. You should help him from the fund. I believe he is starving himself to let his sick wife and children feed.'

'More fool he,' said George Mellor gruffly; 'but I'll see what can be done for him after to-night.'

The arrival of the 'General' on the ground was the signal for the mustering of the men present in companies under their several leaders. Then followed a short drill, and the calling over of the roll, which fell far short of the number expected.

At about half-past eleven Mellor gave a long low whistle to call in stragglers. It brought a few from their ale-cans in the 'Three Nuns' public-house, whose landlord's interest kept him silent. A faint echo from a distance, and a party of fifty or more from Bradford and Dewsbury.

Still their numbers fell short of the army the 'General' had counted on, although the mysterious messenger had beaten up for special recruits in every nook and hollow. It might be that some were sickening of wanton destruction, or that Wainwright's preparations for resistance had got wind, and discretion became the better part of valour.

Midnight was approaching. The Leeds contingent was to meet them fully three miles ahead.

Mellor grew impatient. He would wait no longer for laggards. He gave the word for his followers to quit the field for the road.

Stepping in front of his men, he harangued them much as a nation's general might address his army on the eve of a decisive battle.

'My lads, I suppose you all know the object before us this night is to chastise and humble that insolent braggart Wainwright of Greenfolds, who sets our army at defiance; it will be no child's play if his preparations are as perfect as he boasts. The neighbourhood swarms with soldiers, and there is a blustering parson who has offered to lead them to attack us. But, lads, we have friends among the troops, and we can laugh at the reward he has offered for information of our march to wreck the machines of his tyrannical friend. Three miles ahead we shall be joined by our brethren from Leeds, and then let the domineering tyrant beware. We shall strike a blow this night that will ring through the land, and bring the purse-proud masters to their knees. Now, shoulder arms! Defile! Gunners to the front. Now pistollers. Now hatchetmen. Now hammerers. Now bludgeonmen to the rear. March!'

He had taken up his own position, with Booth by his side, far in advance of Hartland, who had no weapon except a staff

of blackthorn. A workman dismissed by Wainwright went on before as guide over Hartshead Moor. His name was Harley, and he, as a Luddite, had been at once the most bitter against his old master, and the most active in sowing the seeds of disaffection in and around Liversedge.

In the still hours of the night the heavy and measured tramp of armed men upon the hard highway beat on the ears of sleepers, and, startled, they awoke. It was so at all times. Then, when the midnight deeds of the Luddites had struck terror into the hearts of rich and poor, and no man knew whose turn would come next to be ruined, or to see his employer ruined and himself flung out of work, the sound was awful. Blanched faces might be seen pressed against cottage windows as the dark mass strode on, with a faint shimmer of the starlight on hatchet, hammer, or gun barrel. And perchance, as the white faces turned from the window, there might be an under-breath exclamation, 'It's them Ludds!' and the husband's response be, 'Ay; theyn be bahn fur Greenfolds, an' if they bin, theere'll be murder done, sartain as owt.'

In less than an hour Greenfolds Mill lay in the hollow before them, its waterwheel at rest, the beck singing a lullaby to the sleepers within, the very rows of starlit windows seeming like the eyes of Argus winking in their watch.

'Halt!' cried Mellor. It was the spot where he had expected to find the Leeds contingent. He waited, listened; no sound of marching feet came on the clear, dry air. He and Thorpe employed the interval marshalling their men in files, thirteen abreast.

'I say,' whispered Ben Walker to Booth, 'thirteen's an unlucky number! I wish we wur well out o' this!'

'You coward!' retorted Booth; 'you'd best not let the General hear you breathe a syllable of *ill-luck*. He's just in the mood to give you a quietus for less.'

And if Walker did not understand the word, he could take the hint, for Mellor's temper *was* up.

The Leeds reinforcement had not appeared. There was still no sound of men on the march.

Mellor cursed and chafed at the delay. He was too impatient to wait, as Thorpe, Booth, John Walker, and other leaders advised.

'Here, Hartland,' he commanded, 'you go back and bring

the stragglers up. Marshall, run along the Birstal road and hurry the Leeds men on. I'll wait no longer. We're strong enough to do this business without them.'

'I think you had better wait,' suggested Booth. 'You know the place is fortified, and you risk other lives besides your own.'

'If thou'rt turning coward at th' last pinch, thou'd best go back,' sneered Mellor in his temper. 'I want no cowards here to daunt my brave men.'

'I'm no coward,' replied John; 'but rashness may spoil all. However, have your own way.'

Impetuous Mellor did have his own headstrong will. He had all the fierce courage, but not the coolness, for a leader of men.

'It's no use waiting here till hot blood cools,' he cried impatiently, and in another second gave the word to 'March! Caution!'

'*Bring* the stragglers up,' he had said to Hartland; but Hartland *sent* the stragglers forward, and still went on, quitting the high-road and cutting across through Fixby woods unseen. When he at last emerged from the woods of Grimescar, all disguise was gone. He was hurrying home. Whatever might betide, he kept his oath never to raise an ungrateful hand against his benefactor.

Little knew he how, or by whom, that benefactor had been warned and kept on the alert.

And as little knew Betty and Thomas Longmore whither their two sons were on the march that fatal night.

CHAPTER III.

THE ALARM BELL.

FOR six weeks had Mr. Wainwright slept in his mill, with a woefully small garrison to oppose the numbers on the march to attack, but he depended more on the vigilance of the few trusty work-people and soldiers,—nine all told,—and on the peculiar strength of his fortifications, than on uncertain numbers.

There were two stout watchmen outside the great gates to give the first alarm. There was a different sentinel alone on the abandoned ground floor, but the floor above was flagged, and in line with the windows. Metal rings were sunk into the stone, at once to raise the huge flags as screens from outer fusillade, and to enable the protected garrison to pour a murderous fire on any assailants near the windows, or who might rush as into a death-trap below; nay, the very stairs were protected by a revolving *chevaux-de-frise* at the head.

On that upper floor was situated the owner's counting-house, and there his temporary bed had been, whilst mattresses had been laid down for his garrison under shelter of the tilted flags. In the daytime the traps were down, and work-people came and went in utter ignorance that the floor was less a solid fixture than it seemed.

He had never relaxed his vigilance, and Benjy's well-meant warning had given a fillip to his watchfulness; but nature will take its revenge on over-tried nerves, and that night sleep found him early.

The Rev. Bertrand Marston had offered a golden bribe for the earliest intelligence of Luddite advance; but a sentinel no gold could bribe was the one to give the first alarm in the mill.

Stealthily and craftily as Indians, two wiry Luddites had sprung upon the warders at the gates and gagged them; but, ere the silent deed was done, there was a growl, and then a frantic bark from the grand sentinel inside the mill, and all there upsprang, alert, scantily clad, discreetly silent.

The hoarse voice of Mellor might be heard outside, 'Hatchetmen, hammermen, to your work!' and in less than a minute the ponderous weapons were hacking and beating the great strong gates into matchwood.

A yell as from the throats of a host of savages proclaimed the downfall of the outer gates, and a rush into the spacious yard. At once a shower of great stones, torn from adjacent walls, went dashing and crashing through the shining windows with a splintering sound, as if every bit of glass or frame had gone at one swoop.

Another wild yell from without, a maddened barking from the honest dog within, the hoarse command, 'Fire!' and a volley from the besiegers, poured in through the empty windows, was spent upon senseless flagstones.

The contemptuous silence of the besieged had exasperated Mellor; he knew not what it meant. He had not learned the strength that lies in waiting. The garrison had simply kept within the law, had waited the first fire.

The answering volley from the darksome, loopholed mill was instantaneous—and effective.

Some one had fallen, others had cried out in pain, as bullets found their billets.

And even at that crisis, while Mellor, in a voice hoarse with rage and desperation, called his 'Hatchetmen, to the door!' and in the same breath cursed the tardiness of the Leeds detachment, those said Leeds Luddites, for whom he had not the patience to wait, were even then within hearing of the din, and of the alarm bell clanging over all—and, liking not the sound, incontinently retreated.

Meanwhile, excitable young Booth, Thorpe, and other leaders were rushing to and fro amongst the men with words

of command or inspiration, the thin womanish voice of the saddler almost drowned by the deep bass of Mellor.

A worthy door was that, of thick, stout oak planking, clamped with iron inside, thickly studded over with great iron nails, bolted and barred across into the very masonry.

The hatchetmen were foiled. Their weapons were dinted or broken at the shafts, their own brawny arms felt the jar of resisting force. They yielded, the door did not, though it was chipped and hacked. With curses on their lips, they lowered their weapons and confessed themselves beaten.

'Forward, hammermen!' cried exasperated Mellor, as the baffled hatchetmen withdrew to make way for gigantic 'Enoch' and its fellows to dint and batter at a barrier as obstinate as its owner.

The bell within the turret rang and clanged, the dog barked and howled by turns, the massive door shook under the tremendous blows, and sparks flew from the stone lintel and jambs as other hammers struck at random.

And through it all, gunners without and within loaded and fired, the formerly impotently, the latter tellingly, as many a sharp cry proclaimed.

'Silence that bell! Fire at the bell!' shouted Mellor, with an oath, infuriated lest before the door was down, or the mill in their hands, its incessant tolling should bring the troopers down upon them.

In another second the bell was mute. 'Hurrah! th' bell's done for!' shouted the man who had fired.

'Hurrah!' went loudly up from scores of Luddite throats.

They shouted too soon. Only the rope had broken.

Equal to any emergency, Mr. Wainright despatched two men to the roof, the one to ring whilst the other fired on the surging crowd below.

And again the alarm rang out that should have brought help to the besieged.

Half beside himself with baffled rage, Mellor called out, 'Try the back!'

There was a rush of figures round the mill, and the defiant voice of Mr. Wainwright promised to be there to greet them.

The back! There lay the mill-pool and the water-wheel.

The first foolhardy adventurer, a man named Brook, fell into the goyt or dam, and lost his *hat* if he managed to save his life.

And still the bell rang on, and still was a running fire kept up, steadily from the garrison, irregularly from the Ludds, whose ammunition began to fail.

There was a cry that the door was yielding.

'Bang in, lads!' shouted Mellor in exultation. 'In with you! Are you in, my lads? Keep close. Bang in and d——n them; kill every one of them!'

A studding nail had been driven in and the wood around it splintered. It left a gaping hole, but the strong bolts and locks stood firm.

There was a sudden rush to the door, John Booth one of the foremost.

A soldier standing on the stairhead saw the glimmer of light through the aperture. He aimed steadily at the hole, and poor John Booth dropped with an awful shriek to the earth. He reloaded, aimed again, and then 'Enoch' fell from the powerless arm of the gigantic hammerman, Jonathan Dean, just as he had beaten in another hole.

Mellor was in despair. All was going wrong. They had been fighting for half an hour, yet the firing from the mill was as steady as ever.

All was not so well within the mill as he thought. John Walker, clambering up to one of the windows, hung on by an arm, and, though a bullet was sent through his three-cornered hat, he fired his pistol into the mill, and the noble dog set up a howl of pain.

On the upper floor there was suspicion of treachery. Mr. Wainwright, by the light of the flashing musketry, observed a soldier standing idle at his side.

'You are not firing,' said he; 'how is that?'

'I might injure a brother if I fired!' was the low reply.

'A brother?' ejaculated Mr. Wainwright, and cast a withering glance of scorn upon the man, but not another word. He felt he had there a traitor to watch, in addition to the mob outside.

He had misunderstood the soldier. *He* was no Luddite. He was only a Luddite's brother—Tom Hartland, one of the dismounted carabineers.

With the disablement of the great hammerman, and the fall of his friend Booth, George Mellor lost heart.

Other strong men wielding sledge-hammers had taken the place of Jonathan Dean, keeping clear of the fatal hole. They pounded away with all their might, but they hampered each other, and half their blows were spent on the masonry, the flying chips telling on their own faces. But the discovery that all the great 'Enoch' had accomplished was the dislodgment of a defective nail and five or six inches of woodwork, and that the door was still practically sound, disheartened them.

What was to be done?

The leaders drew together for conference, out of range of musketry.

'It's no use pounding at that door, now "Enoch's" useless,' urged Thorpe. 'We'd best give up!'

'We've hardly a charge of powder left, and they keep firing from th' mill like demons! I wish I'd my pistol at their powder barrel,' said John Walker.

'That confounded bell bangs me,' said Mellor.

'Ay,' remarked another. 'Booth said it was tolling his knell.'

'If we stay here it will toll the knell of Luddism,' cried Mellor bluntly. 'It seems as if in the lull I could hear the tramp of troops. We must be off, and reckon with Wainwright some other way. Pass the word to the men. But what of Booth and Harley? We cannot leave them on the ground to perish.'

'We MUST!' said Thorpe significantly. 'We came cocksure of victory, and made no provision fur defeat. It will be all work to save oursens.'

'John,' said Mellor, kneeling by his friend's side, 'it's all up with us. We would carry you away with us, but we never provided for an hour like this. We were certain of success. It cuts me to the heart to desert you, but the cause demands it. Whatever comes, *remember your oath.* We will have vengeance on Wainwright yet for the blood he has spilt.'

And so John, *Mellor's dearest friend*, was left to his fate.

By this time the rioters were tearing out at the gates, shouting as they went, 'To the house! To the house! We'll soon

find entrance theere!' But Mellor had the other helpless sufferer to visit and exhort to keep his oath.

As he turned to quit the yard, the very last who had power to leave it, he shook his fist at the grim mill, on which a streak of moonlight fell through a rift in darkening clouds, and shouted out a violent threat of vengeance on the owner.

And then he also took to his heels. Not from care for himself, but to arrest his predatory followers.

'You must save yourselves, my brave men. That demoniac bell is bringing the troopers down upon us. I can hear them coming. We will settle with the tyrant Wainwright another day.'

Already the crowd had dwindled. The Liversedge and Heckmondwike men had already slunk away to their homes. Some there were who fled, and never were seen more; a few who fled, and returned in after years, when Luddism was but a memory. There were wounded men hiding behind walls, in coppices, in lonely huts; men afraid even to seek the surgical aid required. Like Xerxes at Thermopylæ, they looked for victory and found defeat.

The cry 'To the house!' smote Mr. Wainwright as with the sting of a bullet. For a moment he went ghastly. In another he had shaken it off.

'They would not dare,' he said, 'with this bell ringing out. We must have troops here presently—Marston would be certain to bring them. Besides, that threat might be only a ruse to draw me forth, and open a way for them to get in. God protect my wife and little ones if those savages do storm the Hall. Thank God! Kate has a spirit and presence of mind. I'd back her and Janet to do men's duty in a crisis such as this. Still, her guard is small, and the odds are fearful.'

The reflection was not one to ensure tranquillity. He listened with his ears on the strain for every sound, now praising his wife's nerve, anon cursing the delay of his friend Marston and the troops. It was an agonising time for the husband and father.

Mrs. Wainwright might be a brave woman; but bravery compelled to remain passive is apt to chafe at inertion, whilst the dearly beloved are exposed to dangers bravery cannot share.

All were asleep in the house, except the sentinel pacing the slated entrance hall below.

As the alarm bell sent its message pealing through the air, the sleepers started in their beds.

'That cannot be the church bell!' gasped Mrs. Wainwright in dismay. 'It is dark night. Oh, surely it is not the mill! God help my dear husband if those Luddites are upon us!'

She was up and dressing in feverish haste, ringing the servants' bell first thing. She met them on the stairs, as much alarmed as herself.

The horrid din of hammering, yelling, firing, told what a conflict was raging.

'Oh, missis,' cried frightened Mary, 'suppose they come here, what's to be done?'

'We must keep them out,' was the prompt reply. 'I can fire a gun, and so can Janet.'

'But th' darling bairns?'

'Dress them quickly, and bring them down-stairs. I will find some safe hiding-place for them.'

When Mary, trembling in every limb, brought her charges down-stairs, equally alarmed at being awaked in the middle of the night and at the noises of the pandemonium so terribly near, she found her mistress placing cushions in a huge clothes-basket, and Janet extinguishing the last embers of yesterday's fire.

'Now, my darlings,' said the mother, placing the children in the basket, 'we are going to hide you up the big chimney to keep you safe from the bad men who are making all that noise. You must be quiet as little mice, my darlings, and mother will give you some nice cake.'

The uproar had terrified the children into submission. They were laid in the basket as in a cradle, and then Mary, obeying orders, climbed up the wide chimney, and, standing on the pothook bar, contrived to fling the end of a stout rope over the axle of the smokejack fan, by means of which the basket was hauled up out of sight and well secured.

A comical figure Mary cut undoubtedly, face, hands, frock, all smeared with soot. At another time there might have been a laugh at her expense. The situation was too tragic for laughter.

The soldiers guarding the front door saw nothing of this.

'Missis,' said she, almost blubbering, 'I con do noa gooid down here. Hadna I better sit on th' crowbar an' talk to th' bairns to keep them quiet,'

'That's a good lass. Ay, do.'

Thus encouraged, back she went to her perch, jerking out as she went—

'I wish all th' Luddites were hanged with one rope, that I do! It's all through them as faither con get noa wark.'

Ah! she little thought how often her hasty wish would recur to her, or the fresh significance it would bear in the after-time.

It was an anxious time then for the two soldiers in the hall as well as for the mistress and her maids in the kitchen. They held a post of danger and of responsibility, but the yelling and firing told of fearful odds should the enemy assail the house.

Mrs. Wainwright thought less of odds than of defence. Whilst Janet reached down a couple of fowling-pieces from their rack over the high mantelshelf, she went to encourage the guard.

'If you are only brave and faithful to us,' said she, 'Mr. Wainwright will not fail to reward you well. We have our own guns loaded, and shall not trouble you with our timidity.'

She was a woman of nerve and purpose. Brave as a lioness in defence of her young, she did not give way to useless terror; but it knocked loudly at her breast, for all the resolute face she showed.

Excepting in the brief interval when the rope broke or was cut by a shot, the boom of the bell kept the wife and mother's anxious heart on the strain, every fresh yell adding to its intensity. She dreaded to think what tragedy might be enacted that night, and many a fervent prayer went up to the Almighty throne from silent lips.

After some twenty minutes the firing seemed to slacken, but the brazen-throated bell neither wearied nor grew hoarse.

Then she fancied she heard the rush of feet drawing nearer to the Hall, and was sure she caught the cry 'To the house! To the house!'

At once she laid her hands upon her gun, and bade Janet do the same.

Then came a sudden halt, a rush of flying feet that seemed to die away in the distance.

The beating of her heart had kept pace with the ticking of the great hall clock, and but for the continuous booming of the bell, she would have felt assured the Luddites had left ruin and tragedy behind them.

They had done both, but not precisely as she was dreading.

CHAPTER IV.

VICTIMS.

HOUGH the Rev. Bertrand Marston had promised a guinea for the earliest intelligence of Luddite approach to Greenfolds, and had duly paid his guinea to a claimant, he and the soldiers he had summoned in haste were by no means the first to arrive, even after the mischief was done.

Three other gentlemen were on the spot before him, one of whom was so near a neighbour as to have witnessed the whole affray from his own windows—an announcement which did not tend to improve Mr. Wainwright's temper.

'Ah! I shall know the value of a neighbour in future,' said he sarcastically between his teeth.

Testimony to the nature of the conflict was not wanting. The yard was strewn with splintered glass, stones, masks, broken weapons, powder-horns, the scabbard and hilt of a sword, pools of blood, and, saddest sight of all, two human beings, groaning and writhing in agony—agony no doubt aggravated by the knowledge that, having served their leader's turn, they were left to the tender mercies of those they had wronged.

Mr. Dix, Wainwright's neighbour, a kind-hearted little fellow, knelt down in pity by the side of poor John Booth, whose feminine face and attire suggested that a woman lay there, white and ghastly in the moonlight.

'My poor fellow, can I do anything for you?' asked Mr. Dix, taking him by the hand.

'Oh, sir, kill me, and put an end to my misery!' implored Booth.

'Nay, my lad; something may be done to relieve you. I will seek help;' and he pressed the clammy hand in kind assurance. 'I grieve to see your father's son here, and in such a strait.'

Mr. Wainwright came up, stern and unyielding. His shattered gates, his battered door, his windowless mill, and his dead dog were not objects to soften such a man. He recognised John Booth at once.

'What?' he exclaimed; '*you* in league with a gang of lawless ruffians? No, sir; he shall have nothing until he confesses who were the leaders in this outrage' (to Mr. Dix). 'Yet if you, John Booth, have been led into this by false representations and evil men, and will give us their names, or those of your leaders, I will have you carried into my own house, and treated with the best of skill and tenderness.'

He saw the thin lips twitching and working, but only a groan was the answer.

'If not,' he went on, 'you may lie there and die in your contumacy.'

The alarm had brought a number of work-people and others into the yard at last. A general murmur greeted this harsh and grating speech. They could not feel for the manufacturer's provocation.

John only groaned, and feebly murmured 'Water!'

'You shall have it,' whispered pitiful Mr. Dix, and, rising, he remarked to Mr. Wainwright, 'He is a mere lad, sir; pray have compassion on him. He must have been led into this.'

But Mr. Wainwright turned upon his heel, hardened by his losses; and just such another scene took place by the side of Harley, where stood the rector, with his long sword belted to his side, endeavouring to extort confession from the other wounded man, whose life was speeding away.

Either the free comments of the crowd or his own better nature prevailed; and by the time Mr. Dix was back from his own house with a glass of wine and water for each, Mr. Wainwright had given orders for the careful removal of the wounded men into the mill.

By this time a surgeon was on the spot. Cursory examination showed that Booth's leg was frightfully shattered, and that Harley had been shot through the lungs. He, the Luddites' guide over the trackless moor, he who had led the foe against his old master, had been the first to fall!

Mary, coming from the house with blankets to use as litters for their removal, met a file of dismounted carabineers, with her Uncle Tom bound and a prisoner in their midst.

With a scream she ran towards them, dropping the blankets, and crying out, 'Oh, Uncle Tom, what's wrang? Wheere are they takkin' yo?'

He hung his head, but answered never a word.

'To be flogged, no doubt,' said one of his guard, flinging his words over his shoulder for her edification.

'Oh, that's not true! I'm sure it's not true!' she cried pitifully. 'I'll ask maister.' Picking up the blankets, she hurried into the mill yard, and towards a group near the door, where stood her master. Resigning her unwieldy burden to ready hands, she ran to her master, crying out—

'Oh, maister, what has Uncle Tom been doing? Is it true he's going to be flogged?'

Her master eyed her steadily and curiously.

'Doing nothing,' was his equivocal reply, his nostrils panting angrily as he spoke.

'Not a doubt they'll flog him if he gets his deserts,' said the soldierly rector, answering the one half her question.

'Flogged for doing nothing?' gasped the girl in bewilderment; then, as they moved aside to give space for lifting the roughly-bandaged men upon the blankets, the moonlight fell full on the white face of Booth.

The girl shrieked aloud, 'Why, theere's Maister Booth! Oh, what's *he* doing here? What's the matter? What will Lydia say? Oh, Maister Booth, Maister Booth, what hev they done to yo?' and she flung herself on her knees by his side in evident distress.

Mr. Wainwright and Mr. Marston exchanged glances. 'Hush! the young fellow is speaking,' said some one.

'Mary — if I die — give my true love to Lydia — tell her she will—soon find—worthier sweetheart.'

In a few minutes he was in the blanket, unconscious from

pain and hemorrhage; and Mary, sobbing bitterly, was on her way back to her mistress, with a heart full of inexplicable trouble, alike dazed and bewildered.

The blanket litters were raised from the ground by ready volunteers, and carried some distance to an inn, surrounded by a guard of cavalry, with the Rev. Bertrand Marston at their head. And only the skies wept over them.

There another surgeon was already in attendance, and whilst the rough remedies of the time were resorted to, the magisterial rector and others tormented the wounded prisoners with questions concerning their comrades and leaders.

Amputation was the only cure for young Booth's shattered leg, said the doctors, and lost no time in proceeding to operate. It certainly proved a cure for all evils, shattered aspirations as well as limbs. His was no frame to stand rough surgery or cautery. His life ebbed away as ebbed its crimson tide.

About six o'clock that bright Sabbath morning, when he was at the last gasp, another attempt was made to extort from him confession, but he only raised his eyelids, looked his clerical questioner steadily in the face, and with a faint smile on his thin lips, he passed away; no friend, no mother by his side to soothe his dying hours or receive his parting breath; himself true alike to the cause he had espoused and to the reckless *friend* who had brought him to this dire extremity—*and left him in it.* Truly poor, weak, vacillating John Booth was meant for better things.

His comrade in misfortune lingered until the following day, but his lips were sealed in silence, and all apparent clue to the confederates was a man's hat found floating in the goyt.

Yet men desperately wounded had left many crimson tracks along the roads, and three of them were discovered lying together, in the rain, under the dark fir-trees in a wood. But before the discoverer could turn his knowledge to account, nothing remained but clots of blood to verify his statement.

Here, there, and everywhere about, were Luddites, ready to succour or shelter a fallen brother.

Dr. Hebblethwaite had an early patient that Sunday morning, a stranger, who trumped up a tale to account for his injury. The sagacious doctor shook his head. There was no persuading *him* that a bullet-hole was an abrasion, or the result

of a fall. He probed the wound, removed the leaden intruder and particles of splintered bone; saturated lint in some chemical solution, plugged the hole, and bandaged the shoulder, and told his patient to return and have it dressed again.

Before the morning was over, Elland and all the country round rang with the Greenfolds news. The *Hue and Cry*[1] went forth throughout the land with less rapidity. The patient did not dare again to approach the doctor. Ignorant home dressing did the rest. Within a fortnight, Betty and Thomas Longmore mourned a son, and Josiah had a brother the less. Jack had been a wool-comber, well paid, and never out of work. Luddism had made his wife a widow, his child an orphan; improvidence had made them beggars. Betty and her husband opened their doors to the child. They would have nothing to do with the widow, and but for thrifty Josiah she might have starved; work was so scarce, waiting hands so many, that the widow of a Luddite was certain to go to the wall.

The fight at Greenfolds was known all over the country by breakfast-time that Sunday morning. Be sure those who fled had not told the news willingly. But men can hardly hide without some one's knowledge. The chief couriers were the milkboys, who, sitting astride their sure-footed mules or asses, with deep bright cans slung on either side, plied their sticks without mercy, and went almost at a gallop over broken ground or level, and left their news with the milk, alike at the mansions of the rich and the cottages of the poor; on the high moors and in the hollows, by the wayside and in the crowded street; and thus came the news to the sparse dwellings in the Out Lane. But the news had grown considerably—'Greenfolds Mill had been destroyed, and half the Luddites killed or taken.'

The intelligence sent Josiah flying into the town for surer information, heedless of pattering showers. He found his brother Jack's wife washing out a shirt that stained the water red, and he was denied a sight of his brother, who was 'in bed asleep,' said the wife, her face white and frightened. On

[1] *Hue and Cry*, a small printed manifesto, issued by the metropolitan police to facilitate the detection of criminals prior to the invention of telegraphy and photography.

he went to Wright's, inquiring for John Booth. 'Don't you know,' said Mr. Wright, 'the miserable lad has been shot? No doubt he's dead by this time.'

'Shot?' echoed Josiah, with a groan. 'Shot? Then he *had* been drawn into the vile league in spite of warning. It will be a terrible blow to his friends.'

Mr. Wright observed the young man's eyes fill with tears as he spoke.

'It might have been worse for them,' said he; 'better the bullet than the hangman.'

'Ay, sir,' assented Josiah; 'but it is lamentable a young man of his parts and kind heart should fall a sacrifice. I owe all my education, little as it is, to his good nature, sir, and I grieve for him;' adding after a pause, 'Do you know where he has been taken, or who are the men killed?'

Josiah, though only a tailor's foreman and cutter, had won the respect of his master and of his master's neighbours.

'No one killed outright, I believe, but I hear there is a man named Harley in as bad a plight as John.'

Josiah paled and drew in his breath. Was it possible that Harley was a mistake for Hartland? He moved towards the door. 'I must be off,' he said, 'and thank you, sir.'

Mr. Wright stopped him. 'If you think of going to Greenfolds, I can give you a seat in my gig. Being the lad's master, I may obtain admission to him, and for you also if with me, without suspicion attaching to yourself.'

While Josiah's grateful thanks were yet on his lips, the gig, hired for the occasion, drove up to the door, and in less than two minutes they were bowling along at full speed to the scene of the night's conflict, passing people by hundreds on the road, either drawn thither by sympathy or curiosity.

'The vicar's likely to preach to empty pews this morning,' remarked Mr. Wright. 'One would wonder where all the people come from.'

He wondered more when, later, his horse could barely open a passage to the inn; so dense was the throng, and so excited, the troop of carabineers in front could hardly keep them in check.

They would scarcely have obtained an entrance, had not the Rev. Bertrand Marston, then riding away to his clerical duty, stopped his fiery blood-mare and accosted them.

'So, sir,' said he, addressing the saddler, 'a fine rebel you have fostered under your roof! I wish you had been here three hours earlier. *You* perhaps might have got some confession out of him before he died.'

'Then is he really dead? Poor John!' ejaculated Josiah and Mr. Wright in a breath.

'I suppose you desire to see him?' observed the clergyman, whose long sword still clattered by his side. For a moment he looked doubtfully at Josiah, but the young man did not blench beneath his scrutiny, and on the authority of the magistrate both were passed into the chamber where together lay the dead and the dying Luddite, with a sentinel at the door, and a surgeon and others in attendance.

It was a sad and gruesome sight for master and friend, and it wrung Josiah's heart to see the lines of pain on the finely chiselled marble face. But there was no privacy for emotion, and neither lingered long. One great dread was, however, removed from the heart of Josiah. In the dying prisoner he beheld only a stranger.

Ere they went back, Mr. Wright was desirous to ascertain for himself the condition of the mill.

As they drove up, Mr. Wainwright, in the midst of a group of gentlemen, was describing the conflict of the previous night, showing the splintered door and chipped lintels. Catching sight of Josiah, he walked up to the side of the gig.

'Harkee, young man! You recommended a nurse for my children a year ago. Were you aware that her father and her uncle were both Luddites?'

'Certainly not, sir!' was Josiah's emphatic answer. 'Her parents are very poor now, but strictly honourable. And I do not think her father has seen his brother, who is a soldier, for more than twenty years. You must have been misinformed.'

'I hope so. At all events, Mary claims as her Uncle Tom a Corporal Hartland left to guard my mill. He refused to fire lest he should shoot *a brother*, and now refuses to say whom he meant. We are satisfied with the lass herself; but unless I can be also satisfied that Walter Hartland was not among the savages who wrought this ruin and threatened to *kill us all*, I pack Mary back home. I keep no spies on my premises.'

'Well, sir,' replied Josiah gravely, 'I know nothing myself of the Luddites; but they are so secret, so underhand, there is

no knowing who may be one in these times. I hope I shall be able to satisfy you that Mary is no spy, and her father had no hand in this wreckage. I have heard him speak of you at all times with the deepest gratitude. And, sir, I can assure you he believes his brother to be now in Leeds.'

Somewhat mollified by this reply, which upset his own theories, Mr. Wainwright only responded—

'Well, we shall see your report. I know we can depend on *your* veracity,' coming from him as an addendum.

'May I ask, sir, if young Booth's friends have been communicated with?' then queried Mr. Wright.

'He is not my prisoner,' was the curt reply.

'He is no one's prisoner now, sir,' remarked Mr. Wright gravely; and Mr. Wainwright with a start turned sharply away.

'I must drive over to Lowmoor,' said the ironmonger to Josiah. 'His father must be informed. It will not do to leave the painful duty to irritated or unfeeling men. I can put you down either in Bradley Lane or in Elland, if that will suit you. I must change my horse at the "Saville Arms" to wait my return home, so I must go round.'

Josiah assented, with thanks. 'I have a painful task before me,' he said mournfully. 'I shall have to break the dreadful news to the poor fellow's sweetheart. God knows how she will bear it!'

CHAPTER V.

A DOG'S LIFE.

THOUGH the town was slowly creeping up into the country, and many a new stone house had latterly arisen to dot the green hillsides, Side-o'-Beck was still an out-of-the-way dwelling, and though news will fly like thistledown, there must be a breath to float either.

Walter Hartland, laggard as he had been on his way to Greenfolds, had been no laggard on his way back. He overleapt fences, walked, ran, keeping as far as possible the straight flight of an arrow, his long legs standing him in good stead, and excitement supplying temporary strength.

When he lifted his own latch close upon one in the morning, he was utterly spent. He had missed the Watch and Ward by the narrowest chance, and had he struck a light, they must have seen it when they passed.

He was weary, and slept. But his sleep was restless with excitement and his own temerity. As was frequently the case, just as the clock struck one, he wakened Marian with calling out in his dreams. All his disjointed words pointed to an attack on Greenfolds, and set Marian shuddering. Once he called out aloud, 'I said I wuldn't, an' I hev not!' Then after a while he muttered, 'Let them shoot me, an' ha' done wi' it;' again, 'Theere's nowt to live fur, an' it's a dog's life.' For another hour or so he slept composedly, then he flung his arms about wildly, crying out, 'So it's to be Dacre's next, is it? I tell yo I'll ha' nowt to do wi' firing it!'

Marian listened in indescribable agony, only tempered by the knowledge thus gained, that, whatever lawlessness he was committed to, his very soul rebelled against it. But what was that about Dacre's? If that mill was wrecked, their own ruin would be complete. The wages of Lydia and Robby had become their chief dependence. What was to be done? How was she to warn Mr. Dacre, without implicating Wat? It was time for the family to be astir before Marian's anxiety allowed her to slumber again.

They were both asleep when Lydia came softly down-stairs, herself in trouble because John Booth had again failed to meet her on the Saturday night. She had begun to imagine he was ashamed of her and the poor clothes she wore, and she had mustered up courage to offer to release him from his promise; but he had forced her to give her reason, and then laughed at it, promising to dress her better when she was his wife, at the same time telling her he was not altogether master of his leisure, and she was not to be disappointed if he was not always at their meeting-place.

But she *was* disappointed and perplexed, and longed for advice and sympathy. Her secret engagement troubled her repose. She consulted Josiah, and he, with well-schooled friendliness that covered a bursting heart, advised her, entreated her, to take counsel with her mother.

Only the night before she had promised she would do so—the night that was to put a tragic end to her secret and her love-dream.

It was later than usual when she came down that Sunday morning. Father and mother were both asleep.

As cautiously as possible she moved about to avoid waking them. When the fire was alight and the pot upon it, she opened the coffer and lifted thence the boys' Sunday suits, now woefully small and shabby, and carried them up-stairs. Then she brought little Silas down to dress him by the fire, every few minutes glancing at the clock, for Josiah had promised to take the boys to church, whilst she remained at home to relieve her mother.

They waited and waited until it was too late for the boys to go alone, but Josiah came not.

The morning passed, their poor dinner was cooked and eaten, but he had not arrived.

At noon Mr. Wright stopped his gig at the 'Three Nuns' by the Dumb Steeple, to feed his horse and order dinner. But though a savoury odour of ham and eggs pervaded the house, and at any other time would have been most appetising to Josiah, he could barely swallow a mouthful and a glass of ale, so overwhelmed was he with grief and anxiety.

The sorrows of others were pressing heavily upon him in addition to his own. His brother whom he had not been allowed to see, wounded; his friend John a criminal, stiff and cold; Mr. Wainwright's charge concerning Walter Hartland; and, worst of all, the dread intelligence to be broken to the girl he would have kept from pain at any sacrifice of self.

It was long past two in the afternoon when Josiah approached the gate, looking so wretched that a chill foreboding of evil struck them one and all.

'What is the matter, Josiah?' cried Lydia, pressing forward, and grasping him by the arm. Marian and Wat stood still, and seemed alike afraid to ask.

'I am the bearer of very ill tidings—*very*,' he said; adding, 'Benjy, keep your brothers in the garth awhile; here are some cakes for you.'

He closed the door behind him, and dropped into the nearest chair, as if to gather strength for his recital.

'About one o'clock this good Sabbath morning, Greenfolds Mill was attacked by a gang of ruffians,' he said, as if weighing his words.

Wat's face went as grey as ashes. 'Oh, what have they done? They have surely not—?' he began, with nervous anxiety, whilst Marian and Lydia clasped their hands together in mute affright.

'They battered down the gates, shattered the windows, attempted the door, and threatened to kill all the defenders of the mill; but, thank God! Mr. Wainwright was well prepared, and in less than three-quarters of an hour the wretched Luddites were driven back.'

'Thank God!' cried Wat and the women in a breath. Marian remembered the striking of the clock at *one*. It was a relief to know that her husband was then at home, asleep.

'Ay, let us be thankful more blood was not shed,' Josiah went on, with some difficulty, as he heard a breathless '*More?*' from Marian. 'Ay, *more;* I have lost a dear friend—*we*

have lost a dear friend in the encounter,' he corrected. 'There was sharp firing on both sides, and when the Luddites retreated they left two desperately wounded men on the ground; to say nothing of those who carried their bleeding wounds away with them.' He sighed heavily, thinking of his own brother. 'Lydia, my lass,' he then said sorrowfully and brokenly, 'you will never see—never see John Booth again alive.'

Lydia threw up her arms and shrieked aloud, then, staggering to a chair, covered her face with her hands and sobbed piteously.

Marian had sat silent and aghast, yet she did not faint. Booth had been no favourite of hers, but she could regret his untimely end. Lydia's hysterical sobs were a revelation to her. She rose and went to the girl, and gathered the bowed head to her motherly breast, whispering such words of comfort as mothers only can.

Walter, rising to his full height and pacing the stone floor, stretched out his right hand and vented his feelings in loud anathemas against the Luddites as snarers of men's souls.

Lydia's sobbing distressed Josiah greatly. 'Will you come into the garth with me?' he said, addressing his old master.

As he drew the door gently behind them, he heard Lydia sob out, 'Oh, I did love him so!' and the words cut him to the quick. Some minutes elapsed before he spoke again. Then he observed significantly—

'I trust *you* were not at Greenfolds Mill this morning?'

Wat looked at him fixedly, as if wondering what was meant, his breath coming in thick gasps. 'I was NOT,' said he, with an air of deep thankfulness; adding after a pause, 'I would rayther cut off my reight hand than raise it against Mr. Wainwright.'

'Do you know where your brother Tom is now?' was the next question.

'Hegh, lad, I wish I did! He wur gooing to Leeds when I heeard from him.'

'*I* have heard of him, and he is in the neighbourhood,' remarked Josiah; and, to the deep anguish of Walter, he proceeded to tell all he knew, all he had seen and heard at Liversedge.

And then, after a sympathetic pressure of the hand, he rose

to depart, leaving Walter in a state of dazed stupor on the bench. To intrude on the sorrow indoors he felt would be sacrilege.

'Benjy,' said he, as he passed out of the garth, 'keep your brothers quiet if you can, and do not ask questions when you go into the house. Some one is dead, and they are in trouble. You shall know when I come again.'

'Very well,' answered the lad soberly. 'I never do ask questions.'

That night Walter penned a few lines to Mr. Wainwright, with no consciousness that they contained an equivoque :—

'*Sir,—I have ascertained that W. H. was not concerned in the attack on your mill. I was the first bearer of the news to him. He was apparently staggered by it. His expressions of gratitude towards you left no doubt of his sincerity. And he had no knowledge of his brother's whereabouts. He is most anxious to see him again.—From your obedient, humble servant,*

'*Josiah Longmore.*'

Mr. Wainwright had not thought proper to inform Josiah that he and his wife had already had a controversy respecting Mary, or that she was greatly opposed to the dismissal of the girl, who had shown so much feeling and affection to the children, not hesitating to sit for more than half an hour on an iron bar in a darksome chimney to keep them from fretting. She said, 'Instead of sending her away, you ought to give Mary a new frock in place of the one she has spoiled in her devotion to us and our little ones.'

He did not show Josiah's letter to his wife; but he said no more about sending the children's young nurse away, and he raised no objections when at a later date Mrs. Wainwright found the girl a new frock and neckerchief, and gave her a holiday to see her friends at home.

But many serious events happened before that came about. The time was too critical for more than a passing thought of new frocks or holidays.

After an inquest on the bodies of the two Luddites, resulting in a verdict of 'Justifiable homicide,' that of Harley was removed to Halifax for interment on the Wednesday. The old churchyard was crowded with spectators. The Democratic

Club, with John Baines and two of his sons at the head, who wore white crape around their black hats, attended as mourners in addition to the young man's family and personal friends; and but for the presence of a body of soldiers, the demonstration might not have been a quiet one. John Baines and his sons had, however, made themselves conspicuous, and were marked men thenceforth.

The magistrates of Huddersfield, knowing well the fiery element in their midst, and suspecting the Longroyd croppers (although no criminal act had as yet been traced home to any individual), were afraid of a yet stronger demonstration at the interment of John Booth, fixed for the following forenoon.

'Bury him quietly at six in the morning,' suggested prompt Squire Radcliffe, 'and baulk the fellows.'

They did 'baulk the fellows,' but at the same time provoked them to exasperation.

Many were the townspeople who had no sympathy with Luddism who could yet distinguish between the offender and his offence, who pitied his youth and condemned his seducers, people who knew and respected his father, and would have shown that respect at the grave side for the afflicted parent's sake if not for the youth's own. To them, and still more to the Brotherhood, it was disappointing to find at ten o'clock only a new grave filled in and trodden down.

The croppers had assembled in great force, George Mellor and a few others in deep mourning.

Although he had led him into danger, and left him behind in his extremity, the fragile youth, with his pale face and bookish lore, was the one sympathetic link between Mellor and humanity.

A few tears shed over the coffin he had helped to fill might have tended to soften the heart fast hardening to stone.

If remorse haunted him, it took a savage shape, and vented itself in maledictions on Wainwright and his class. He blamed not their own forcible invasion of Greenfolds, but the owner's resistance, and no sooner was he back at his stepfather's shop than he raged and swore, vowing that he would avenge the blood of Booth on Wainwright and the whole fraternity of millowners.

He then excitedly proposed that one or other of the men

around him should stab or poison Wainwright when on the Saturday he came to give evidence at the appointed court-martial on Tom Hartland.

His less sanguinary comrades showed the futility and impossibility of the attempt, seeing that every avenue to the inn where the court assembled would be blocked by soldiers.

'He puts up his horse at the "Plough," doesn't he?' asked Mellor, the swelling veins on his sternly knitted brows betokening the raging storm within.

'Ay!' answered John Walker, the man who made a boast of having shot Wainwright's faithful canine sentinel. 'An' he put oop that great hound on his theere too. He'll ha' noan o' that brute at his heels now.'

'I've been a fool!' growled Mellor, gnashing his big white teeth in his rage. 'A fool! I stopped a lass taking a place as waiter at the "Plough;" a lass as would ha' put owt in his drink I'd have given her, if I had but said the word.'

'Don't be too sure of that, George,' put in Thorpe drily. 'Susan's not so mich under yor finger an' thumb as yo may think. Shu's too tender-hearted to drown a kitten. Shu may be ower fond o' thee; but shu'd noather poison man nor pup at any one's bidding.'

George glowered at him savagely; but he went on: 'An' it's well known as Wainwright has noather taken bite nor sup oather at the "Plough" or any other haase in Huddersfeldt for many a month. Yo'll ha' to deal wi' him i' soom other fashion.'

'Then we'll shoot him down on his way home, and Radcliffe too,' said the other vengefully, between his set teeth, his fury seeming to rise to fever-heat with every impediment. He denounced the men around him as chicken-hearted traitors, and, on their oath, required them to cast lots which two of their number should go forth on the Saturday to slay 'the tyrant,' as the 'avengers of blood.'

The lots were cast, he drawing with the rest; and unless a face quivered, no one knew or told his fellow whose paper was blank, whose held the significant black cross.

Saturday came. Mr. Wainwright rode into the town on a mettlesome black horse, with pistols in his holsters; but unattended. Two hours later, his evidence given, he remounted and took his way thoughtfully homewards.

The court-martial had given him subject for reflection. He had been received with enthusiasm by the assembled officers, and complimented on the gallant defence of his mill.

'A few such brave men as you, sir, would speedily put a stop to these midnight marauders,' said the officer presiding.

But no admiration of his gallantry gave any weight to his words when he pleaded for a remission of the sentence passed by the court on the offending soldier. And he rode home regretting that in the heat of temper he had called attention to the man's breach of duty. He regarded the defence of his mill as a stern necessity forced upon him, but not the less did he lament the blood shed in his cause. If inflexible to act, he was not too hard to regret.

Whilst ruefully meditating, he had suffered the pace of his horse to slacken to a walk. Arriving at a spot where the copsewood rose on either side thick and dense, by some inspiration unpremeditated he suddenly put his horse to the gallop. It was not one moment too soon. There was a flash, a report, and the whizz of a bullet over the back of his steed. The mettlesome animal in its fright darted forward and wheeled completely round. The sudden and unexpected action saved his master's life.

A second pistol fired almost simultaneously by a foe concealed in the opposite copse also missed its mark, just grazing the animal's skin.

The rider put his spurs to use, and dashed forward at headlong speed. When he reached Greenfolds, his horse was all afoam. He almost reeled from the saddle and into the house, overpowered by excitement and exhaustion.

His appearance scared his wife and the servants. She threw her arms around him, anxiously entreating to know what had befallen.

'Oh, my love, my husband, what *is* the matter now? What terrible thing has happened to bring you home in such a state?'

'Oh, Kate,' said he, 'be thankful you have me safely at home. I have been fired at twice by some dastardly ruffians in hiding. A sudden change in the pace of my horse alone saved me, or I should now have been a dead man. These things are making life a burden to me. When will this persecution end? The life I am living is worse than a dog's

life. But for you, my dear, brave wife, and our precious bairns, I would gladly be rid of it.'

The mill-owner so recently publicly complimented on his bravery dropped into a seat, and covered his agitated face with both his hands; whilst his good wife bent over him in tears, and Janet stood aloof with Mary, keeping the astonished children back.

'A dog's life!' Had not Walter Hartland said the same? And this was the fruit of Luddism in cottage and in hall.

CHAPTER VI.

BRAVERY AND RASHNESS.

DR. WAINWRIGHT had received a shock, and it is no disparagement to a brave man to say so. The most hardened duellist would recoil from assassination, from being made a target unawares, picked off at leisure by a skulking ruffian hiding in a secret nook.

His nerves were scarcely strung up to their normal pitch when, on the Monday following the court-martial, he was summoned from his early luncheon and a consultation with Bertrand Marston by the unexpected roll of kettledrums, the loud bray of a bugle drawing nearer and nearer, along with the clatter and the tramp of cavalry.

Ere they could reach the spot, a company of infantry and a troop of carabineers, their short carbines held butt end on thigh, ready for use, defiled into the disordered mill yard, between the shattered half-hung gates, and took possession of the debris-strewn ground in front of the windowless mill, where carpenters and glaziers were already at work.

At command, like breathing automatons, the horsemen wheeled and ranged their steeds flank to flank on two sides the spacious quadrangle. The infantry fell back upon the third, leaving a central group of officers apart.

In their midst was Tom Hartland, handcuffed, and a prisoner.

As a natural concomitant, a noisy, demonstrative mob, that

had gathered and grown along the march from the Huddersfield temporary barracks, was there also, mounted on the walls, swarming in at the open gates.

According to the custom of the period, the sentence of a court-martial was bound to be carried out on the site of the prisoner's delinquency.

This was explained to Mr. Wainwright, when, accompanied by a sergeant and a file of soldiers as a bodyguard, he left his house to inquire into their proceedings, and offer a remonstrance.

There are scores of men, ay, even on our judicial benches, who will issue decrees and mete out punishments, who would be almost driven mad to witness the distress and tortures ensuing. The eye is more sensitive to pain than the lip, and heart does not always answer the brain.

Mr. Wainwright was one of these. If he had appeared hard and harsh towards Booth and Harley, it must be remembered that he was in a state of violent excitement at the time, and that under the dark shadow of the mill he saw their personal sufferings but imperfectly.

But he was neither hard nor unfeeling, and what he had seen in daylight had made him shrink from the infliction of further pain on his account.

He begged and entreated that the man might be pardoned. Then that the sentence might be mitigated or carried out elsewhere. Very polite were the officers, but stonily inflexible.

The triangles were set up, and Tom Hartland, who had been promoted for bravery in battle, was stripped to the waist and tied up to receive three hundred lashes laid on by a regimental farrier.

The details would be sickening. The first stroke of the cat left nine blue wheals across his back. Ere long it was a mass of blood.

Women in the crowd fainted. Men turned away or cried out aloud. Mr. Wainwright, in an agony, passionately begged, entreated, implored. His hearers might have been deaf.

'The soldier has offended against military law. We must preserve discipline,' was all the answer he obtained.

'Good heavens, gentlemen! do be merciful!' he cried at

last. 'The man will die under the torture. Do not let me have his cruel death upon my conscience. I would rather have had my mill burned to the ground than this should have happened.'

The officers themselves were but men. There was a brief consultation. The angry murmurs of the crowd, at first directed against Mr. Wainwright, were now levelled against them. Perhaps they considered that sufficient had been done for discipline. Possibly the voice of the crowd grew imperative. Mr. Wainwright's plea for mercy was at last admitted.

The signal was given for the flogging to cease. The soldier, whose very sense of hearing must have been numb, was told that he had to thank the compassion of Mr. Wainwright for the remission of his full sentence, and then a cheer went up from the crowd.

As he was released from the triangles he staggered, and, had not the farrier caught him, he would have fallen to the ground.

'Can I do nothing for you, my poor fellow?' asked Mr. Wainwright huskily.

'Water,' murmured Tom faintly.

'A few wet cloths to his back would not be amiss,' put in the regimental surgeon.

Forgetful of his own need of a guard, Mr. Wainwright darted off himself to his house, calling a lad after him. He found wife, servants, children, all in tears; the latter crying in concert with their elders.

Back he came with brandy and water, unmolested, the lad behind him carrying wetted sheets.

As he held up the glass to the corporal's quivering lips, he slipped a guinea into the man's hand, and afterwards discovered that his stiff, unyielding, soldierly friend, the Rev. Bertrand Marston, had given Tom Hartland a like golden plaister.

'The man is not in a condition to march,' exclaimed Mr. Wainwright in dismay, as he saw preparations for departure.

'We are provided with a litter, sir,' was the somewhat curt rejoinder.

Whilst the litter was preparing, the officers were invited

to Mr. Wainwright's house for refreshments. Ale was sent out in large cans for the men, and at the same time a relay of cool dressings provided for the sufferer's raw back and shoulders.

When Mr. Wainwright and the officers returned, Tom Hartland was laid in the litter on the ground, his jacket thrown over him, and Mary kneeling by its side, sobbing over him bitterly.

'Don't cry, my lass,' said her uncle faintly. 'I shall get well again; but tell your master I am grateful to him. He has been better to me than I expected or deserved. I've lost my chance o' seeing thy father, my lass, I am afeared.'

The litter was raised shoulder-high by his comrades; the motion shook him, and he groaned through his set teeth. The order was given to 'March!' and Mary went towards the side gate of the many-angled house, sobbing bitterly, as soldiers and spectators both slowly left the ground, attended by the clank of bits, the beat of hoofs, the tramp of men on foot.

Mr. Wainwright's eyes followed the girl until the garden wall and a green privet-bush hid her from sight.

'Yon's a tender-hearted little lass. It's well I had young Longmore's letter to assure me of her good faith, or I might have been doubtful of her whispering with the corporal.'

If he had any lingering doubts, they were soon set at rest by the corporal's own grateful message as delivered by her.

Whilst Mary in her new trouble was puzzling her young brains how to communicate to her family the astounding intelligence with which her mind was overloaded, seeing that her mistress had had other (and to her more pressing) affairs on hand than a nursemaid's letter home, matters were going but sadly in that home.

Josiah's direful news had broken down the barriers between mother and daughter when the floodgates of Lydia's grief for her dead lover were opened. But they looked upon John Booth with different eyes, and the sympathy was not all it might have been. Then the girl's grief was of a complex nature. She had worshipped him as a being moulded in other clay than herself, a hero who was stooping down

from an empyrean height to lift her, a poor, uneducated factory girl, to his level. The shock of his death was scarcely greater than the discovery that he was one of the detestable Luddites.

His long orations upon the bondage of the nations, and the glories of freedom in the abstract, had sounded grand in her ears from their very incomprehensibility. To learn that they meant Luddism and the wanton destruction of property and life was appalling. Then the warning letter Benjy had written recurred to her mind, and she upbraided herself as the destroyer of her lover, foolishly supposing Mr. Wainwright's preparations for defence had originated with that piece of paper.

It was not until she found how much her grief distressed her mother, that she choked down her sobs, and under the pretence, 'He's not worth fretting over,' dried her eyes, washed her face, and prepared the Sunday afternoon tea.

Not in the Britannia metal tea-pot; that and the painted tray and the china tea-service had long found their way to the plethoric shelves of the pawnbroker, and the commonest of common crockery had to do duty instead. The house was being gradually denuded of all that had made it bright and pleasant.

It, however, is not the determined choking down of sobs, or the repression of tears and utterance that makes grief less hard to bear. And Lydia found it so.

She went out into the garth after she had cleared the table, and, finding Benjy alone, drew him away from the cottage front, and in a sudden outburst told him—

'You will never see John ny more. He has been shot in attacking Greenfolds Mill. He was a Luddite, Benjy.'

Then again her sorrow found vent in tears. Benjy did his best to comfort her, but after a while blurted out his opinions pretty freely.

'Now, don't cry so hard, Lyd. Mr. Booth warn't worth it. Yo culdn't fret worse if it wur David or 'Siah as wur killed.'

Some way the suggestion caused Lydia to catch her breath. The possibility of David's loss or Josiah's had not crossed her mind. The bare suggestion did check the current of her

tears, as in an instant she thought what a blank the loss of Josiah would leave. He was but a friend, but he had been better to her than a brother. She dried her eyes on her patched check apron, and went indoors without another word. It was bed-time for Silas, and almost mechanically she undressed him, and heard the child's simple prayer by his bedside.

Her hardest trial met her at the mill. The bulk of the girls were ignorant, coarse, rude, and unfeeling. Several who had envied her the attention of two good-looking, respectably-dressed young men, were only too ready to have a fling at her in her sorrow.

'Hegh, lass! thou's lost thy fine sweetheart nah!' one bawled out, as they approached the gates in the early morning. 'So thy grand chap wur nowt but a Ludd aftur o'!' was flung in her teeth as she crossed the factory yard; and many other equally cutting jeers had she to bear during the day.

'I wonder if I should ha' grown like these lasses if 'Siah and Mr. Booth hadn't kept me away from them, and taught me better manners,' she thought to herself, as she passed through their midst with compressed lips, and a struggle to keep back either retort or tears. Then she began to speculate on all she had learned from the two, and though she thought of Booth as 'poor dear John,' she remembered Josiah as her oldest friend, who had taught her not only to walk and to read, but to preserve her self-respect in spite of poverty. And so, in all her fretting for her dead lover, thoughts of the living friend would obtrude.

At home, her father, restless and uneasy, without work, and afraid to show himself near Longroyd Bridge, went down to the weaver's for a pipe and fresh human society. His own thoughts drove him wild.

No sooner was he out of sight than his troubled wife turned to Benjy, often her confidant of late, and urged him without delay to write and warn Mr. Dacre, as he had written to Mr. Wainwright, unknown to her.

'If yo dunnaugh, theer mill's sure to be burnt down or summat, an' then, lad, we mun starve outreet. Theere'll be no wark for Lyd or Robby. I'll finish your mat while you writen.'

'If yo dun, I con tak' th' mats to Maister Wright, an' slip th' letter i' th' poast mysen.'

'Ay, lad, but yo mun let no one know, not even thy faither.'

Benjy stared, but he never questioned his mother's wisdom. He had his doubts of his father ever since he began to spend so many nights from home.

Another leaf was torn from the copybook. He found his task easier this time, and for lack of invention repeated almost the formula of his former attempt; only he added, as a sort of postscript—

'*Be careful of fire.*'

Benjy had a couple of thrum mats ready for lining. When he got down-stairs, with his letter folded for sealing with a bit of beeswax, the mats were finished and tied up neatly.

Curly was soon within the shafts of his cart, and the pair were off.

'Wheere ta bahn?' called his father from Longmore's door.

'Maister Wright's wi' these mats;' and no more questions were asked.

The mats were ordered, and so he was sure of a customer. He, on his way to the ironmonger's, slipped his letter in the post, but not wholly unobserved. A woman cleaning a window in an upper room had watched him stand on tiptoe to reach the slit. His was not a figure to pass unnoticed.

Mr. Wainwright had taken Benjy's warning to the Rev. Bertram Marston; Mr. Dacre went with his to a magistrate less blustering and more sagacious, Mr. Radcliffe, who, although he had himself been fired at on his way home to Milns Bridge, was not one whit less determined to put Luddism down with a firm hand.

'Ah!' said he, examining the crude epistle; 'this is not to be despised. Wainwright had a like communication. Leave it with me, and say not a word about it to living creature. You shall have an effective guard. But you must neglect no precaution. Go over your mill in the dark yourself every night after the hands are gone. Your nose will be your safest guide. Wool smoulders, and a foot may stamp out what, if neglected, would lay your mill in ashes.'

'Thank you for the hint, sir. I will take another from gallant Mr. Wainwright, and make my bed in the mill.'

That was Tuesday, the market day. Before the hands departed for the night, a cordon of soldiers had been drawn round Dacre's mill, and a couple of sentinels posted at the gates.

When Lydia and Robby carried home the news, Marian looked thankfully at Benjy. Her husband, sitting moodily by an apology for a fire, clasped his hands together and exclaimed—

'I hope to God there will be no more bloodshed!'

But he had never an idea that any revelation of his had been the mainspring to set in motion the vigilant guard round the mill where his boy and girl worked.

Mellor heard before the night was out. It was like fuel to the flame of his passions. Mr. Dacre, having a spinning and not a finishing factory, had felt his premises secure, and hitherto taken no precautions. Mellor and his *confrères*, Thorpe and Hey, had counted on the mill as an easy prey, and the defeat at Greenfolds only made them more eager to take revenge on —somebody.

Other news came to him that night that drove the hot-tempered man to frenzy.

Besides the disabled Ludds in hiding (Jonathan Dean, Jack Longmore, Haigh, and many more), several had taken flight altogether, and there were rumours that Bill Longmore and two companions had set off to Leeds intending to enlist.

Here were defections when recruits were needed. But more exasperating still was the report of the meeting of Mr. Horsley of Marsden with Mr. Wainwright in front of the 'George Inn' a week later.

They were still friends, but lapse of years, the early marriage of the one, and the later marriage of the other, to say nothing of the many intervening miles between Marsden and Liversedge, and separate cares and interests, had toned down the warmth of old intimacy to common business acquaintance. Recent events had roused William Horsley's admiration of his old schoolfellow to a pitch of enthusiasm.

'Give me your hand, sir,' said he. 'I am proud to touch the hand of a brave and resolute man, doubly proud to find

him in my own worthy friend. You have done nobly, sir. You have set an example to give heart to the pusillanimous. I trust our manufacturers will follow your example. Let us by all means subscribe largely to the vicar's fund for the relief of the suffering poor, and let us deal fairly with our own work-people, but'—and he swore a great oath—'my mill is my own, I live by it, and my work-people live by it, and I will defend it to the last gasp. You know, sir, it stands high, and commands the high-road; it has been fortified on your principle. But I have embrasures in my outer wall and cannon behind to sweep the road whichever way an enemy approaches. The Ludds will have as warm a reception if they come my way, as they had from you, my brave sir.'

'Ah, yes, sir,' replied Mr. Wainwright; 'but after the excitement is over, the sight of the suffering and dying makes the heart sick.'

'I've no such womanish qualms, my fine fellow. The sneaking midnight plunderers should all be strung up as scarecrows. They say I am "Luddite mad," and little children mock me on the roads, but I am no temporising coward. I would ride up to my horse's fetlocks in Luddite blood before they should touch mill or machine of mine. We must stamp Luddism out, or it will stamp us out. Good-morning, my brave sir.'

'Good-morning.'

They raised their curly-brimmed hats, and went their several ways; Mr. Wainwright thoughtful but wary. Mr. Horsley in his long-tailed riding-coat and top-boots, set his foot down on the stones as if on the faces of his foes, and marched on defiantly erect, little wotting what his hot and heedless tongue had done; and equally scorning the prudential advice of his less boastful companion, Mr. Armitage of Woodbottom, who, having himself been shot at, suggested caution and a guarded tongue in crowded thoroughfares.

The front of the 'George Inn' was also the front of the open Market-place. All manner of idlers and loungers hung about. His voice had been loud and unguarded.

George Mellor was still smarting under his various disappointments. The bold defiance of Mr. Horsley fermented in his brain like yeast. It had lost nothing in its conveyance

to him. Horsley was reported to have said he 'meant to ride up to his horse's belly-band in Luddite blood afore he'd done.' And Mellor seemed to smart afresh under the castigating whip he had felt so oft in his rebellious boyhood, and he ground his teeth on the asseveration that 'the time had come to pay off old scores.'

CHAPTER VII.

ON HIS WAY HOME.

IT has elsewhere been said that Lydia attributed her sweetheart's waning attention to the extreme poverty of her appearance, not a shilling of her earnings having gone towards her own use for a very long period. He laughed off her fears, but it never occurred to him that a gift of a ribbon, or a kerchief, or any article of attire might have been a suitable present to a girl of her class, and might have saved her from much humiliation in contrasting her own faded and even patched frocks with his good cloth.

Certainly they were never seen in the town together, and whilst there were few to notice the disparity when he walked home with her over the moorland in the dusk of evening in his work-a-day clothes, there was less chance of their being seen together near solitary Side-o'-Beck, when he sported his Sunday suit. If he then mentally contrasted their appearance, it was but to flatter himself that he was putting his theories of universal equality into practice, and to take some credit for the condescension. Not that he was ungenerous. He was merely unreflecting.

Josiah had observed with deep regret the struggle the good girl had to preserve even the semblance of decent respectability in her attire, and gave John Booth one or two hints which he was either too obtuse or unwilling to take. His own wages were not large, and he was required to dress respectably, but he did not go beyond it, and he would have been glad to supply

visible needs, if he could have done so with propriety, regarding her relations to Booth.

Josiah met her and Robby as of old on the Tuesday evening after Booth's death. He was carrying a parcel. He walked on with them a little beyond his father's door, chiefly talking of his dead friend, and on saying good-night, he placed the parcel in her hand.

'I thought perhaps you would like to put on a little mourning for poor John, and for his sake I hope you will not refuse what is here. It is not much.'

Lydia burst into tears. She had kept them back through the scorn and the business of the day, but the thoughtful kindness of Josiah set them flowing fast. She knew well he had long seen the strife with poverty in their home, had known why she had been always absent from church of late, and she felt more than she could express.

Had she been a young lady, or even a shopkeeper's daughter, she might have 'declined with thanks.' She simply said through her tears, 'It's very good of yo, 'Siah. I could not afford to buy as much as a black ribbon; an' I thank yo humbly.'

When she opened her parcel at home, she found, to her surprise, sufficient iron-grey stuff for a gown, a black and white shawl, neckerchief, and ribbon for her bonnet. They were but of common texture; nothing to suggest unfitness with her station or surroundings.

He had debated within himself whether the gown should not be black, but something unrecognised within his breast suggested otherwise, and he argued, 'Mrs. Hartland would think the gift a portent of still greater evil; best not.'

As it was, Marian looked very ruefully on the black ribbon and neckerchief; however much the dress as a gift might afford satisfaction.

'It's noan reet to say owt again th' deead,' said she, 'but it wouldn ha' been a long while afore Maister Booth wouldn ha' thowt o' buying thee owt. 'Siah's worth a hundred on him. But I'd rayther he hadna gien you them black things. I canna bide the seet o' black!'

And as if the bits of black had conjured up the thought, she immediately added, 'I wonder whatn's getten our Davy as we dunnot hear,' a heavy sigh following the interjection.

When, about ten days later, Betty Longmore came sobbing

and toiling up the hill, to relieve her overburdened breast of the mournful tale that her son Bill had run away in a fright and enlisted, and that his brother Jack had died of a wound received at Greenfolds, Marian exclaimed, 'Ah, I knowed when 'Siah bought them black things summat warr suer to happen. Black brings black!'

And Betty, shaking her head from side to side, corroborated the observation amid her fast-falling tears. Yet she, so impatient over small matters, was neither noisy nor demonstrative in her grief, and she told the friend to whom she had come for sympathy—

'Tom an' 'Siah tak' it sorely to heart, an' I didno dare to have my cry out before them, chuse how badly I felt, lest I made them feel it moore an' moore.'

She wept unrestrainedly in the presence of her neighbour, who was full of sympathy, and not likely to misunderstand. Her own mother-heart was alive with kindred feeling in the absence and silence of her son David.

Yet Marian ceased for the time being to connect the ominous black with David, and was pleased that Lydia need no longer be ashamed to show herself at church. But intelligence of her own mother's death through grief over Little John's transportation followed quickly, and set her on the same superstitious and melancholy track. And as week after week went by, bringing no news of her first-born, she clung to her foreboding with strong pertinacity, though she said much less than she thought.

Indeed, reticence and silent brooding had become the habit of the household of late. The mother was ailing and visibly declining. The father was gloomy. Benjamin was, whenever he could obtain thrums or heald-thread, industriously knitting door-mats for sale, or at other times as industriously writing the copies, learning the lessons, or working the sums Josiah set for him on the Sunday. Only the gambols of Curly and little Silas broke the six days' monotony. The home-coming of Robby and Lydia night by night could not do it. They came home weary and dull. Rob dropped asleep on the nearest seat, and Lydia turned to the neglected housework with less alacrity than of old. John Booth's death, and the manner of it, had wounded and affected her more deeply than she was willing to admit; whilst fears lest her father should come to

a like end caused her to start and dream in her troubled sleep. She was consequently looking pale and worn.

'No mon con say that his actions, reight or wrang, shall affect nobody but hissen.'

Wat repeated this to himself over and over again, but it did not make him the more cheerful companion, or more energetic. He was sinking into hopeless despondence. His was not the mettle of a dark conspirator. He had scarcely heart or hope to cultivate the ground where grew their turnips and kail. The blight of his oath was on him and all around him.

Meanwhile, the fierce, vindictive plotter who had imposed the oath, and brought death and destruction on his own one dear friend, was chafing and nursing fresh schemes of malignant savagery, enraged to discover that he did *not* hold the universe at his feet.

To him it was maddening to abandon a plan he had once formed. He had vowed at Horbury to give Dacre's mill and Horsley's to the flames like Foster's. It would now have to be carried by craft if at all. His weakened and discomfited force would be unequal to cope with the military guard around it, to say nothing of the loss sustained by the disablement of Jonathan Dean, the sturdy hammerman who wielded the great 'Enoch.' There were doubts whether he would ever ply hammer or dress cloth again.

James Haigh, one of his lieutenants, was also badly wounded and in hiding. Hartland seemed afraid to show his face. Both the Longmores were gone, with them others not hitherto named; and John Wood was grumbling at the absence of his croppers, affecting to know nothing of the cause.

Then Squire Radcliffe, nothing daunted by the Luddite bullet that had carried off a button from his coat, had doubled the Watch and Ward, who patrolled town and country in parties, special constables and military together, rigidly enforcing his magisterial edict for the extinction of all household lights by nine o'clock at night. In Nottingham the hour had originally been ten.

This patrol of citizens and soldiers was not so easily eluded as the loudly careering cavalry, and the danger of meeting for drill was increased largely. Then firearms had been broken and left behind at Greenfolds, and more were absolutely necessary for action.

Thorpe, the cropper who worked at Fisher's, a heavy, gloomy, silent man, counselled patience and waiting until the storm blew over, and, above all things, advised the hotheaded madman he called 'General' to be more guarded in his speech.

His advice was thrown away. The report of Mr. Horsley's imprudent boast might have set Mellor on fire. Straight upon it came the news of the official search for arms, to prevent them falling into Luddite hands.

In the open shop among the men and boys he paced the floor raving and swearing that he would have vengeance—'Horsley's blood, and Armitage's too.'

Sowden listened and pondered, but, with his usual regard for self, 'said nowt.'

On the last Tuesday in April, when the woods and the moorlands wore the tenderest livery of spring; when the white blossoms of the sloe were mistaken for the hawthorn not yet unveiled; when the plumy larch, the graceful ash, and branching sycamore promised shelter to the building birds in return for services of song; when the yellow breast of the olive-backed willow wren was scarcely to be distinguished from the downy catkins of the willow whence came its sweetly-shivering notes; when the swift and the swallow had taken possession of their old-time nests; when the air was filled with the perfume of lilac, jonquil, and narcissus; when the brimstone butterfly was fluttering in the air, and all nature was rejoicing in the promise of sweet life, George Mellor, the veins of his forehead filled to bursting with his hot blood, his fiery eyes reddened, his tongue blackened with blasphemous denunciations, was plotting and contriving *death*. By the very force of his vehement passions and dominant will he bore down opposition, and the compact was made to slay Mr. Horsley that day in cold blood.

When the men went to their 'drinking' at four o'clock, he and Thorpe were busied with their murderous preparations in the raising-room, cutting up lead to charge their huge pistols with, and, whether by design or accident, some of the workmen were back before they were completed. Indeed, William Hall, the apprentice, made a remark that if Mellor rammed such a charge of slugs and ball into his Russian pistol, it would 'either burst or jump.'

On the return of their accomplices (Mellor having decided

'there should be no more bungling as in Wainwright's case'). pistols ready loaded were handed to Smith, the other apprentice, and Benjamin Walker, the latter of whom exhibited some reluctance, felt or feigned, to accept the weapon or the onerous office thrust upon him. At the same time they had their orders. 'You two walk on ahead towards Radcliffe's plantation. If we go all four together, it may look suspicious. Wait for us theere.'

Sowden, coming in at the moment, followed them with his eyes and ears, saying to himself, as he saw Smith wrapping his striped woollen apron round his waist so as to conceal a great horse-pistol, 'Theere's some foul deed agate, an' I daurna interfere, or they'd kill me as soon as owt. Oh dear, dear! I know I'm a coward, but I caun't help it. I mon think o' my wife an' bairns. I'd lose my wark, if I didno lose my life, if I wur to say owt. It's hard to hold one's tongue, but I'd do no gooid, an'—an'—I'd best say nowt.'

His very face at the time looked a picture of indecision and helplessness, and Thorpe eyed him steadily as he took down his great shears, and, resting them against his raised right thigh, began to crop the cloth upon his board with an attempt at unconcern.

But he contrived to see Mellor button his bottle-green overcoat over his great Russian pistol with fingers so firm and resolute, it was clear there was no prevision in the owner's brain what tell-tales they might prove. What lay under Thorpe's brown topcoat was as inscrutable as his face.

The high-road from Huddersfield to Marsden, a busy little town seven miles away, on the stony ridge between Yorkshire and Lancashire, lay over Longroyd Bridge, whence it took a south-westerly course over Crossland Moor, between woods and fields, passing few houses but what were then hidden among trees, if we except the 'Warren Inn' on the Longroyd side of the moor, an inn much frequented by croppers and wayfarers. The road might be lonely enough the rest of the week, but on the Tuesday it was lively with the morning and evening traffic to and from the great cloth mart.

Was it by some fatality, or in scornful derision of the unflinching magistrate, that George Mellor pitched upon Mr. Joseph Radcliffe's plantation for his dark deed? Had the proximity of Dungeon Wood no suggestive warning in its name

for him or his fellows? The small plantation suited his murderous purpose well, forming a sharp angle at the fork of the road, and surrounded by a wall some four feet high.

The two repenting croppers were already in the wood, when the two respectably topcoated companions overleapt the uncemented stone wall to join them, crushing down primroses and hyacinths under foot, startling a pair of ringdoves cooing overhead, and silencing the throbbing vespers of a blackcap in a bush. Well might nature hush its heart, and the song-bird fly affrighted from the spot!

There was a feeble protest against their atrocious project by the two first comers, but a threat to put the Luddite penalty in force cowed the remonstrants.

A large stone was removed from the wall at the corner, so as to give Mellor a clearer view down the hill, and, at the same time, a rest for his long pistol, whilst all four lay crouching in wait behind the wall. The two, farther up the plantation, to make all sure.

Ere long there was the thud of hoofs upon the road; a horseman was drawing near. The four conspirators sprang to their feet, fingers were on their triggers.

'Stop!' cried Mellor. 'That's not our man. It's only old Joe Eastwood of Meltham. He's done us no harm. He's made *his* fortune fair enough by hand-loom weaving.'

If the old man had done them no harm, he had a mind to do them some good. The call had reached his ears, and he had caught the gleam of their pistol barrels, if their features were shrouded.

'My lads,' said he, checking his nag, 'you are here for no good purpose. You are meditating an awful crime, which may bring yourselves to an untimely end. Do go home, I implore you. You will never stop the progress of machinery by violent and unlawful deeds. My sons will introduce it if I do not. But pray, do go home now, while your hands and consciences are unstained by blood.'

'Go home yourself, old Joe, and don't meddle with what don't concern you, if you'd keep a whole skin,' came in reply, along with the sharp cock of a pistol.

He took the double hint, and rode on, but could not refrain crying back as he went, 'For God's sake, lads, take a friendly warning. Justice treads on the heels of crime. Bloodshed

builds the gallows. You may kill yourselves with your own bullets.'

But he carried away with him an uneasy mind, and the fear that he had thrown away his words. It would have been throwing away his own life, or he would have turned back to warn approaching strangers.

At his usual hour, half-past five, Mr. Horsley left the town at a leisurely pace, as if defying fate and Luddite bullets. Had he waited a little while, he might have had a friend to bear him company. Nay, a warning that might have saved him, as it saved his friend Mr. Armitage of Woodbottom.

At the 'Warren Inn' he drew rein, drank a glass of spirits and water, stood treat for two cloth-hawkers formerly in his service, and seeing two poorly-clad boys a little distance ahead gathering dung into a small dogcart, he rode on and threw the change to the elder lad, a pale-faced hunchback, who thanked him with a look of surprise and gratitude. The lad knew him well by sight, as who did not who had any business in Huddersfield on market days?

Benjy Hartland, now thirteen, had discovered that he could sell his mats to better profit as a hawker than to Mr. Wright. He had sold a pair in the Market-place to the landlady of the 'Warren Inn,' on the condition that he carried them home for her.

He could not afford to refuse on account of the distance, although he hesitated to burden Curly with Silas so far, and he hoped to find a nearer way home by crossing the river at Milns Bridge, past Squire Radcliffe's well-known abode.

Thus it came about that he and Silas came to be on Marsden Road at that juncture, improving the occasion for the benefit of their sterile bit of land.

They had gone some distance along the road, when they moved aside to let a farmer on horseback pass, and Benjy stood for a moment looking after him and the donor of the pence, by that time abreast of the plantation wall.

At that instant a great flash and a loud report seemed to come from the very wall. Instantaneously it was followed by two other flashes and a duplicated report, as from a double-barrelled gun. Mr. Horsley fell forward on the neck of his plunging horse, then seemed to grasp its mane, rise again to cry in agony the one red word 'Murder!' and drop.

The mounted farmer, whose name was Parr, had darted forward at the first flash, and was not only in time to catch the desperately wounded man, but to prevent further outrage from a dark, fierce-eyed villain in a bottle-green coat, who, mounted on the wall, was about to spring down and finish his murderous work.

'What? Are you not content?' cried out the farmer, looking full at him, whilst pressing forward to catch the unfortunate victim, then faint and failing from loss of blood.

The startled ruffian, who had not observed his approach, dived back over the wall to rejoin his fellows and speed at full tilt across the plantation, alternately cursing Walker for neglecting to fire, and exulting 'That villain Horsley's done for!'

But it was yet daylight, barely six o'clock, and they did not flee unseen.

Even Benjy in his horror saw and fancied he knew the bottle-green topcoat, ere he hurried back to the 'Warren Inn,' dragging Silas after him, and followed by Curly with the cart, the affrighted little hunchback crying out at the pitch of his thin treble, 'Mr. Horsley's shot! Mr. Horsley's shot!'

The outspoken manufacturer was as well known as the Cloth Hall he frequented. Benjy, taking his mats for sale, had seen him many a time.

Assistance was speedily on the spot from the inn, landlord and cloth-hawkers racing up the hill at Benjy's alarm.

They found Mr. Horsley, supported by the farmer, on the side of the road, a few words, spoken before he fell, having told his identity. He was deluged in blood, which was spouting from many a bullet-hole, so brutally had the pistols been loaded.

A passing clothier's cart served to convey the bleeding, helpless man, so recently self-reliant and assertive of his own strength, back to the 'Warren Inn,' which, long before a doctor could be found, was surrounded by a multitude expressing all shades of opinion and sentiment, kept back by a strong military guard.

His first request had been for his own brother Abram, a clergyman who lived close by; and he was speedily by his side to ensure attention, to give the wounded man the

support of his presence, but utterly powerless to check the advance of humanity's invisible foe.

Death had found entrance by seven crimson doors, yet the man of iron nerve and constitution fought with the enemy to the last; but strong will is of no avail when life ebbs away at the femoral artery.

On Thursday morning the master of the fortified mill at Marsden lay an inert mass of pallid clay in a wayside inn.

Almost his last words had been, 'These are awful times, doctor!'

Awful indeed! For at this catastrophe the hearts of masters and mill-owners sank low with apprehension. No one knew whose doom might be the next.

Only the Ludds and their friends ran riot in shameless triumph.

Many a workman's family mourned for a kind master; father, uncle, brother, and those on his own hearth, wore the dark veil of sorrow through all the years of life.

A few blinded croppers, who neither lacked work nor wages, and whose sole aim was destruction and desolation, held a fiend's carnival over this man's end.

CHAPTER VIII.

SCOT FREE.

THAT perverse blindness to consequences which the Scotch call 'fey' must have actuated George Mellor throughout this whole transaction. Though all the men and boys in his stepfather's employ were not Luddites, he had raved and ranted about the premises for days beforehand, showing clearly as the gilded vane on a steeple which way the wind blew. He had loaded almost to the muzzle that conspicuously long brass-mounted foreign pistol of his, with equal disregard to the presence of men or boys. He had as openly handed weapons to others, and gone forth with an accomplice, in a recognisable coat, along a public road, past the loungers at an inn door, in the eye of day, to do his unholy work.

He had, with no awe for magistracy, selected for his lurking-place a plantation belonging to Squire Radcliffe, so small and thin that a labourer at work in a field could witness the murder.

Cool and collected, showing no remorse, he stopped in his flight through the plantation to pick up Thorpe's discharged pistol, thrown to the ground by frightened Ben Walker.

Between Radcliffe's Wood and Dungeon Wood lay two ploughed fields. Across these they sped with so little precaution that a ploughman with his team in the one could see Mellor's topcoat fly open and reveal the formidable brass-bound pistol underneath; so conspicuously indeed that the man, who could not have heard the firing, cried aloud, 'Theere goa Ludds! theere'll be mischief to-neet.'

Once over the wall and in Dungeon Wood, there was a pause for deliberation; but if it struck any of them how short was the passage from another and human Radcliffe to a different Dungeon, it would be Walker, who was all in a tremor.

He and Smith, alike repentant, thrust their pistols into a molehill to be rid of them.

'Here, lads,' cried Mellor, 'you be off to the "Red Cow" at Honley. We have done a good job, but we must part company here. Hall was reight, the pistol's hurt my finger.' It was bleeding, and threatened to be useless for some time to come, but he made light of it.

'I'se no money,' said Walker ruefully.

'Ah, well,' replied Mellor gaily, 'here are two shillings. I suppose the "Red Cow's" milk costs money. But be careful. Don't drink too much. And look sharp.'

His object was to baffle detection, to create an *alibi*. They parted, going different ways, and yet the *same* way, as if pointed by the finger of avenging Deity.

At Honley (a small chapelry on the Holmfirth Road, two miles across country from Dungeon Wood and nearly three from Longroyd) the two dark-coated croppers sat down to their pipes and ale in the common room as ordinary wayfarers. Opposite to them sat a grimy collier much bemused with drink. Presently in came excited weavers and clothiers fresh from Huddersfield, with the startling intelligence that Mr. Horsley of Marsden had been shot on his way home, and was dying.

In nowise disconcerted, and as if the news in no way concerned him, although Walker looked down and was observed, Thomas Smith broke in on the general conversation by whistling a lively air and drumming on the table with his fingers to the tune.

His whistling was so good it woke up the sleepy collier, who straightway started to his feet and struck up a dance on the sanded floor.

A small matter that, but a memorable link in a chain. It served to fix the guilty look of Walker on the memory of the landlady.

Meanwhile Mellor and Thorpe dashed on through the deepening shadow of Dungeon Wood until they reached a

spot known as Dungeon Bottom, or Dungeon End, where lived the former's married cousin Joseph, the cloth-dresser, who had several apprentices.

Here, entering the workshop, Mellor accosted an apprentice, and, being strange to the youth, asked to be shown up-stairs.

Up-stairs was the brushing-room, where, with broad, thin, flat, long-fibred bass brushes, in shape like an inverted Y, the fluff or down was carefully removed from the newly-cropped cloth and set on one side as flocks. There was a small pile of these in one corner.

Mellor threw his own topcoat and Thorpe's also upon the brushing-stone and left them there. He then hid his great pistol and Thorpe's under the flocks, and gave Durrance, the lad, five shillings not to say a word about it to any one.

From the workshops he went into the house with his friend, and asked Mrs. Joseph Mellor if his cousin was at home, knowing well the improbability at that hour on market day.

With a glance at the clock, which indicated a quarter past six, she answered that she did not expect him home from Huddersfield before ten o'clock. He then said, as if it had been their object, 'his friend was seeking work, could they find it for him?' He was answered in the negative. Then he requested permission for his friend to wash his hands and face, which certainly were grimy from gunpowder smoke; borrowed a black silk neckerchief (to replace his own light one similarly discoloured), and also a *drab* topcoat which hung in the workshop.

There was something more than grime on the face of William Thorpe, whose cheek was bleeding. And Mellor's hand needed something more than a wash. His fine pistol had almost shattered his finger. *He* was marked! Did he feel no qualms? Not he. Was not Horsley 'done for'?

They sallied forth two differently dressed men, having left behind them all criminating evidence, save the scratch on Thorpe's cheek and Mellor's damaged finger. What mattered it if the things were found in Joseph's possession? George did not love his scrupulous cousin a bit too well.

Brisk walking soon carried them to Longroyd Bridge, where Thorpe and Mellor were to be seen busily at work in their respective shops, if an *alibi* became necessary.

There the hideous news was already being openly discussed, and Mellor, in his pride and exultation, had not the discretion to hold his tongue. He felt like a hero who had achieved a noble victory, and plumed himself upon it.

He had given five shillings to a strange lad to keep a secret he could not keep himself!

Did the lad keep it, think you? Not he. Calling his fellow-apprentices into the brushing-room, he cautiously exhibited the large and curiously-fluted pistol he had been paid to conceal, and pointed out that the ramrod was missing from the other, and that the weapons had recently been fired.

At seven o'clock, when his master, Joseph Mellor, came home, ignorant of the murder, and wondering what was meant by the soldiers dashing about in all directions, the lad took him up-stairs mysteriously, and, uncovering the pistol, said it had been there hidden by the owner of the overcoat then lying upon the brushing-stone.

Russian pistol and green topcoat were both known to him, as were the dangerous tendencies of the owner. Fearing some evil if either was found in his possession, he lost no time in stowing them away under a heap of straw in his barn. And no sooner did he hear of the direful catastrophe than he took care the topcoats and pistol went back to his cousin George without loss of time.

In and out Mr. Wood's cropping shop people came and went with all the floating rumours respecting Mr. Horsley's progress deathwards, and the probable reward his family would offer, until George Mellor, conscious of his own imprudent admissions, was half beside himself with rage. Overnight he had in confidence to his bedfellow, William Hall, admitted, 'Thou wert reight in saying th' pistol would "jump." It has hurt my finger so that I fear it will ne'er be reight again.' He had been equally incautious with Sowden.

The talk of a reward brought taciturn and stolid Thorpe over from Fisher's at the nooningscaup on Thursday to remonstrate with him on his imprudence, the result being high words and an obvious quarrel. Thomas Smith, however, came on the scene opportunely, and managed to smooth it over, at the same time intimating his doubts of Benjamin Walker and Sowden.

Mellor's veins rose like whipcord. 'I'll serve Horsley's sauce out to the first that shows a sign of treachery,' he said, with a vindictive malediction.

Whilst they were talking, Thorpe had gone straight into the pressing-room, where Sowden was about to resume work. Without waste of words, he produced a pistol he always carried about with him, and required Sowden to take an oath of secrecy about Mr. Horsley's murder.

'I can keep a secret without an oath. I never took an oath in my life. I'se not take one now. It's illegal,' said Sowden. 'I'se not a talker.'

'Nor am I,' replied Thorpe. 'I *act*. An' if thou dunnot repeat the oath after me, thou wilt never see thy wife again.'

Sowden was confessedly a coward. The touch of the cold steel on his temple was too much for him. All in a shiver he mumbled out the words dictated by Thorpe—

'I, Joseph Sowden, do hereby declare and solemnly swear I never will divulge to any person under the canopy of heaven the names of the persons concerned in shooting Horsley, or do anything, or cause anything to be done, which might lead to the discovery of the same, either by word, deed, or sign, on penalty of being sent out of the world. So help me God to keep this my oath inviolate.'

Thorpe had evidently come prepared. A Bible, with this oath written out and wafered on the cover, was offered for his lips to kiss.

Sowden, cunning as cowardly, pressed his cheek *only* against the Book, and felt satisfied his oath was not valid.

But he was not to be let off so easily. He had already objected that the oath was illegal, and subjected taker or giver to seven years' transportation.

Still, under cover of the pistol, he was compelled, by fear for his own life, to sit down on the press table and administer the oath he found written on the Bible-back to every man and boy on the premises, as Mellor brought them in one by one, beginning with Benjamin Walker and William Hall.

And then Mellor and Thorpe shook hands, satisfied about their own security.

'We've shut Sowden's mouth.'

'Ay, an' th' rest too!' was the mutual congratulation.

It would seem as if terror of Luddite power and ubiquity

had indeed sealed up the mouths of men, since not a word of tangible evidence was forthcoming to implicate the guilty.

Mr. Joe Eastwood had sent his private information to the magistrates, but he could swear to neither a face nor a voice. He could only suspect. But that was enough for Mr. Radcliffe.

As quickly as his stunted and wearied limbs would permit, Benjy Hartland had hurried homeward with Silas in the dogcart crying; himself spreading the dread news, 'Mr. Horsley's shot!'

Mrs. Hartland, given to worry about her children when out of sight, grew nervous over the long absence of the boys. 'Something must ha' happened to one or t'other,' she said.

To relieve her mind, Wat put on his hat and shoes, and set out to meet the lads. Dusk was then deepening to dark. He had not gone two hundred paces when Curly's welcome bark was heard.

Question or chiding was anticipated. Benjy's first salutation was, 'Hegh, faither! them wicked Luddites have shot Mr. Horsley! I saw it done!'

'What?' ejaculated Hartland, recoiling as if struck by a poniard. Was not he one of the 'wicked Luddite' brotherhood his own son accused of wilful murder?

'Ay; the man had such a big pistol. And, do you know, he wore a dark-green topcoat, the very marrow[1] of that you made for Mr. George Mellor.'

They were now walking abreast uphill. In the deep twilight the ghastly change in the man's face escaped his son, but his quick 'What dost say?' struck the lad as peculiar in its tone.

The boy repeated his observation.

'Nonsense, Benjy! Bottle-green coats are common enough.'

'Hegh! but not with such high collars and big black buttons,' persisted the lad. 'I should know it again, and him too. I had a good stare at him.'

The boy's persistence struck Wat as serious and dangerous. He had not a doubt of the coat's identity, but knowledge might be fatal.

'Benjy, my lad,' said he in an impressive whisper, 'if yo

[1] Marrow—duplicate or fellow.

let a word slip to any one else about that coat, yo may get us all into terrible trouble. They might kill thee or me next. Yo mun keep it secret for yor very life. Yo mun not say even to yor mother owt about th' man's face, or his pistol, or owt else. It mowt be th' death o' all on us.'

This was no mere threat. He thoroughly believed his own words. He shuddered with horror at that day's catastrophe, and his own league with ruthless assassins, but dread of consequences on his own hearth impelled him to stifle condemning truth on the lips of his son.

Whilst Curly trotted up the path with sleepy Silas in the cart, nodding on the narrow seat which divided it midway, the man stopped outside the garth with his hand on Benjy's shoulder, and only released him on a promise to be silent.

If this was so with one man abhorring crime, so might it be with others. The danger of revelation kept evidence in the background.

In the first agony of remorse, Benjamin Walker made a confession to his mother before the night was out, assuring her that *he* did not fire. But could an ordinary mother be expected to criminate her son, and brave the secret brotherhood of which her elder son also made one, her husband's brother another?

Suspicion hung like a cloud over Mr. John Wood's cropping shop. George Mellor and Benjamin Walker were hauled before the magisterial bench, where Squire Radcliffe presided in ruffled shirt and top-boots, his hand gripped on his knee and his face sternly set, conviction strong in his mind, but baulked and baffled. No direct evidence was tendered. He could not send the men to gaol on mere suspicion. And the dying Horsley's declaration went for nothing lacking independent testimony.

So, too, when Jonathan Dean the hammerman, and two others wounded at Greenfolds, were arrested in their hiding-places, and given into the safe custody of the military. They were placed in the temporary hospital for inspection by the regimental surgeon, in the same room adjoining the 'Woolpack' stables in which lay Thomas Hartland, stretched on his face, his back one sore, sick and helpless with pain.

In the middle of the night there was a sudden cry of 'Fire!' The stables were ablaze. Men anticipating confusion sprang

from no one knew whence, to rescue, not the horses, but the Luddite prisoners.

Discipline is never confused. The guards stuck to their posts (and would no doubt have done so had the whole place been on fire), buckets and water were handy; ostlers were alert as the troopers; the flames were extinguished; the outsiders retired defeated, having succeeded only in half suffocating their friends, and severely scorching the poor corporal, on whom the flames had come through the window.

But the anonymous accuser of these captured Luddites not daring to appear, the three were released, although the surgeon had declared that bullets, not blows, had injured them.

Mr. Wainwright was exasperated. Only that week sixteen pairs of shears for his gig machines, sent into Huddersfield to be sharpened, had been broken to pieces by disguised Luddites on their return, and the driver of the cart left senseless.

'What is a man to do in such a condition of things if the law gives him no protection?' demanded he of Mr. Radcliffe, when he, on the following Tuesday, laid his case before him and his brother magistrate. 'There's Mr. Marston riding all over the country on his grey mare, with a great sword girt on his thigh, bending his stiff back and poking his long nose into every poor hovel on the moors in search of Luddites, and the owner of the hat found in the goyt, until, between his inquisition and his imprudent tongue, I fear for him the fate I providentially escaped. But what is to be done if magistrates and military are alike powerless?'

'My dear sir, that is what I ask myself. The very friends of law and order write anonymously, but dare not come to the front. I have a letter here from Meltham, from one who narrowly escaped the fate of Horsley. He says he rode past my plantation just as the murderers were crouching behind the wall. A great pistol was levelled at him, and he heard one say, "Don't fire. It's only old —— He's done no one any harm. He's made *his* money by fair hand-loom weaving." Then he stopped his horse, and urged upon the men the enormity of the crime they were meditating, telling them that killing masters would not stop the progress of machinery. He

was only sworn at, and told to be off, or they would silence him. But the men kept well behind the wall, and the voice was dissembled. He could not identify either.'

He tossed the letter to Wainwright.

'Hegh!' said he; 'I've a notion that's old Joe Eastwood's writing. He went home just before Horsley, leaving the poor fellow with his friend Armitage.'

'You will have heard what a narrow escape Armitage had?' put in the magistrate.

'No; what was that?'

'Well, he heard from Bickerdike of the "Woolpack," there was a plot to shoot both him and Horsley, and to burn his mill at Woodbottom. So, instead of overtaking the other, as he promised, he turned his horse and rode down the bed of the river to assure himself that his mill was safe; then struck off by byeways over Crossland Moor to his mother's, at Knowl Farm. She would not suffer him to quit her house that night. His less cautious friend had been dead some hours before he heard of the murderous outrage. He said he shivered like an aspen when he was told, so narrowly had he escaped the same fearful end. And he still lives in dread. It is horrible.'

'It *is* horrible! I *know* it!' assented Mr. Wainwright, striding about the magistrate's room. 'And there is no coping with it in its dastardly secrecy. It is not like war, fair and open, that resolute men may face boldly.'

'There you hit the white, sir,' said Mr. Radcliffe; 'but I mean to cope with it one way or other. I am on the track of the scoundrel who left his hat behind in your goyt as a clue. The man called at a place, dripping wet, and borrowed a hat; that hat was returned by a messenger, not the hatless borrower. It shall go hard but I find the owner of the one we hold, and then let the ringleaders look out. They need expect no mercy from me, or from the Government. We must stamp out assassination and outrage, as we would stamp out fire. By the way, Mr. Wainwright, only on Saturday last, whilst Dacre's clerk was paying off his hands, one of them, a steady lass named Hartland, went up to her master, who stood by the door to watch them all out, and in a frightened whisper told him she had heard a window break as she passed the sorting-room door, a door she had seen the sorter lock. In a jiffy the keys were in Dacre's hand, and he at the room door, the

lass after him. Sure enough, the window was smashed, and the fleeces a few yards away were frizzling up and just breaking into flame.

'Without a moment's hesitation, the good lass up with one of the water-buckets that have stood ready since the warning he received, and dashed it over the fire. A second douse and a little stamping did the rest. In stamping Mr. Dacre struck his foot against a great piece of flat stone with a bit of fuse still attached. On the stone was painted in red, "Ludd's torch!" Yet no one had seen the thrower.'

'Good heavens! No man's life or place is safe,' exclaimed Mr. Wainwright, aghast. 'No doubt Foster's mill at Horbury was burned down by similar means. But there not a workman or a villager would stir a foot or lift a bucket to fight the fire. Dared not, I suppose. The authorities seem to manage things better in Lancashire and Cheshire.'

'They do,' honestly assented the magistrate. 'I mean to take a leaf out of their book. I have already written to Mr. Joel Sladen for advice. A rare functionary that. Only think! Thirty-eight Luddites surrounded and imprisoned at one haul! And here we cannot get at the four who were seen, absolutely seen in the daylight to shoot down poor Horsley; and, the impudent wretches! from *my* plantation, sir. But I mean to have them, and your scoundrels too, by fair means or foul. You may take your affidavit of that.'

CHAPTER IX.

DAVID'S DELIVERANCE.

'YOUR presence of mind, my lass, has probably saved my mill from utter destruction,' said Mr. Dacre to Lydia, when the fire was extinguished with the loss only of a few fleeces. 'You are a steady, trustworthy lass; I shall not forget you. And if ever you stand in real want of a friend, come to John Dacre. But for your own sake, my lass, say nothing of what has occurred here. Moorhouse,' he continued, turning to his clerk, who, having, as he fancied, paid off the last hand, ran up the passage to ascertain what the unusual fume and pother meant, and stood dumbfounded at the aspect of the sorting-room, — 'Moorhouse, advance this young woman a shilling a week, and pay the advance to-night. She well deserves it.'

'Hegh! thank yo, sir,' said she, all smiles, and dropping a grateful curtsey. 'But I did nowt I warn't bound to do. Suppose the mill was burnt down, theere'd be no wark for none on us.'

'Did that occur to you when you spoke to me at the door?'

'No, sir; I wur afeard it wur oather them Luddites breaking th' winders, or a thief as knew th' sorters were gone wur getting in. I didno smell th' fire.'

'Ah, that's more likely,' observed her master, and she was dismissed.

'What a while yo hev been, Lyd! What's kept yo so

lang?' asked Robby in a grumbling tone. 'I wur tired o' waiting! 'Siah 'll be gone.'

'I wur paid last, and I've been raised. I've got a shilling more to-neet!' she answered, without a word of the reason why.

'Hegh! a shilling?' cried Robby, with wide-open eyes. 'A shilling moore every week! What will mother say?' and the lad went on whistling in high glee, much as his father had whistled in the old happy times.

'Hegh, 'Siah!' cried Robby, as he sighted the grave young man afar off. 'Lyd's got a rise. A whole shilling a week moore.'

'That's good news, Rob. It's a sign she deserved it. Masters never advance wages without cause. I congratulate you, Lydia,' said he, with a pleasant smile, well knowing the importance of even an extra shilling in a poor family those hard times.

Mr. Dacre's first impulse had been to give the girl a sovereign, but a moment's thought suggested the more permanent method of acknowledgment. It would prevent comment. But he determined to keep an eye upon her.

When informed by Squire Radcliffe that the young woman's father was a suspected Luddite, his reply was, 'Then it's clear the lass is not; and even Hartland himself may be suspected wrongfully.'

Ten days later, when the hawthorns were in full bloom, and the odoriferous air of the country made every breath a delight, Mary Hartland, in all the pride of a seat beside the driver of her master's cloth cart, arrayed in a new linsey gown given by her mistress, her straw hat and ribbons newly cleaned, and her shawl kerchief the brightest of pink, was set down close to the thronged Cloth Hall with a beaming face, to make her way home.

First, however, she must have a peep at Josiah through the shop windows, but they were blocked up with gaily striped mohair and Marseilles waistcoatings, and the doorway with gentlemen who 'seemed as if they never *would* move.' She lingered more than twenty minutes, and walked away at last quite disappointed. But she walked slowly, and with less heart for her next enterprise.

Soldiers on guard at Greenfolds had familiarised her with

sentinels and given her the bearings of the barracks. There she passed the sentry and went boldly up to a sergeant waiting on the steps for orders.

'If you please, I want to see Corporal Hartland, the soldier as was flogged.'

'Have you an order?'

'An order? What's that?'

'A written paper to let you pass. You cannot see him without.'

'But he's my uncle.'

'If he was your father, you could not see him without an order. He is dangerously ill.'

Tears sprang to the girl's eyes. She had not anticipated this rebuff.

Twice disappointed, she bent her steps homeward, not anticipating more disappointment there.

Betty Longmore, hanging her wraps out to dry, with a black ribbon bound round her mob cap and a black kerchief to cover her shoulders, set up a shout on seeing her 'looking so bonnie;' but immediately remembered that Mary came straight from Greenfolds, and at once dropped down on a stone sobbing for her sons, the one almost as much lost to her in the army as the other in the grave. It surprised Betty to hear the good character Mary gave her master.

'He's upreight an' downreight, an' what he says he means, an' one's bahn to do what he orders, as Janet says. But he's a downreight kind master fur a' that. I wur as happy as owt theere wi' them darling bairns, till them Luddites came fleyin' folk to death.'

That set Betty's tongue and tears going again. It was a damper to listen to her lamentations.

It was a worse damper to see how dilapidated Mary's old home had grown in her absence. Possibly the contrast between the well-built, well-appointed abode of her master made the ruin more apparent, for surely the finger of decay was on Side-o'-Beck before she left it. As she drew near, she observed rags doing duty for window-panes, gaps in the flagged roof, the ridge shrinking as if with the weight of years, the walls round the garth jagged and uneven where stones had fallen away, and the garth itself—oh, how different and neglected since Davy was gardener!

In her mother's embrace she might have forgotten this, but she was so wan and frail, and all around was so changed, that Mary almost felt her own buxom freshness and buoyancy out of place.

She missed the old pictures from the walls, the old spinning-wheel, the bright brass candlesticks, the gaily-painted tea-tray, the old oak settle, the patches of plaster from discoloured walls, and her troubled look was not lost on Marian.

'Ay, lass,' said she sadly, 'they're a' gone an' moore beside, an' I'm gooin' too, fur I hae no strength to do a day's wark; an' thy faither only gets a job now an' again by chance. If it warr not fur Lyd's wages and Benjy's mats we mun a' starve; an' shu never keeps a penny back, poor lass.'

That reminded Mary of the bright sovereign she had brought home, and of the tea, sugar, butter, white loaf, and meat pie with which Mrs. Hartland and Janet had filled her basket, and the message that 'it was time Master Joe was breeched, and her father was to have the making of his first suit.'

The girl, so radiant with the fresh bloom on her plump cheeks, the picture of a tidy servant-maid, seemed to the broken-hearted mother a very messenger from heaven.

She had a long day at home with her mother, hearing and giving news, much of which has been already written here, the greatest of all being the discovery of Uncle Tom in the soldier flogged at Greenfolds.

As the others came dropping in at nightfall, there were fresh greetings, fresh surprises, and when Hartland himself came home with no work but a red waistcoat to be made for the ostler at the 'George,' the excitement reached its climax.

'Tom turned up at last!' cried he. 'It's the best news I'se heerd for monny a day. I wur telt a soldier had been flogged, but th' mon mowt ha' had no name. Dost know why he wur flogged, lass?'

'One o' th' croppers telt me,' said Mary hesitatingly; ''twur because he wouldno fire on th' Luddites, fur fear o' shooting yo; some one had telt him yo wur a Luddite.'

Wat's face sank upon his arm on his empty board, and its ashen hue was hidden from the lass.

'Janet said as I'd nigh lost my place o'er it. But I said as I wur sure faither wur never amang them cruel brutes as wur fur killing maister an' all on us.'

'I wur *not* there!' said Walter emphatically. 'I would rather ha' cut off my reight hand than ha' raised it agen Mr. Wainreight!'

But he could not tell the girl he was no Luddite.

The following day, in company with Mary, Hartland himself made an attempt to obtain an order to see his brother.

He discovered that his own name was down on a long list of suspected men, and although he pleaded that he had not seen his brother for twenty years, and that there was money lying in a bank for the corporal of which he knew nothing, he was coldly told he must communicate by letter. He was at the same time informed that his brother, whilst lying helpless, had been severely scorched by the fire lighted by his friends the Ludds, and thus doubly disabled.

Wat groaned and clenched his down-stretched hands in agony. What had Luddism brought to him but misery? was his first thought; his next a lamentation over the ignorant want of penmanship that had been a stumbling-block to him through life. Then came the troubled reflection that Davy could write, but never a line came to comfort them. And his return home was sad enough.

The regulations of the Watch and Ward would not permit Josiah more than a hasty run up to Side-o'-Beck that night to shake Mary by the hand, but Walter found an opportunity to ask him to write a letter on the Sunday to the disabled corporal.

Mary was gone, the letter was written to Tom Hartland on paper of Josiah's own bringing, and for the first time Tom was made aware that his father had died without a will, and that Walter had made a division of the money in the bank, placing the one half to the account of Tom, lest he should be tempted to infringe upon it. Wat's former letter must have miscarried. A brief answer came, penned by a comrade, thanking him for writing, and promising to see them all when he was healed, of which there seemed no immediate prospect.

May wore itself out, June came with its sunshine and long evenings. Dr. Hebblethwaite had found Wat a new customer or two. Josiah had proposed to Mr. Sykes to employ him as a journeyman, but the answer had been an emphatic 'No! The man is in bad odour; I should lose half my trade if he were seen among my men.' Lydia was getting very jaded

with work at the mill and work at home afterwards. It was only by fits and starts that Mrs. Hartland could wash out their few clothes, yet she was loth to give in.

Towards the end of June an astounding letter from Davy was received by Josiah, and on him devolved the task of breaking its contents to Davy's parents.

It told what is already known of the arrest of the amateurs and their friendly spectators on a trumped-up charge of Luddism; of their incarceration in the New Bailey,[1] their removal to Lancaster Castle, their sufferings by the way, and their harsh treatment in confinement, although uncondemned. Then followed another side of the picture. A special commission had been appointed for the trial of the Luddites confined in Lancaster. Only the day before their party was tried, seven men and one woman had been sentenced to be hanged for their share in the Middleton and the Manchester riots. And in spite of Charles Smithson's assurance, Davy said he felt as if his doom was sealed when they went into court, and saw judge, jury, counsel,—Sladen and his spies arrayed against them, and only self-taught, self-composed Charles Smithson there to rise in their defence. But the young fustian-cutter appealed from ignorance to education when he required that the *whole* of the club properties impounded should be produced, besides the swords and so-called disguises. And then he asked if those books reluctantly brought forward, those blunt, unsharpened swords, those theatrical dresses, were the ordinary equipments of conspirators. He showed that the treasonable speeches reported by spies had been spoken on the public stage for centuries before Luddism had been heard of, and indeed, in his whole harangue—which lasted three hours—proved himself no mean student of Shakespeare, and to have "Othello" on the tip of his tongue. The very cap he had worn when arrested, Smithson affirmed, had been embroidered for him by the dainty fingers of his employer's daughter to resemble that worn by Edmund Kean when he played the Moor of Venice. And in his cross-questioning of the spies and Sladen himself, he wrung from them the admission that no one's face was blackened but his own. Judge, jury, opposing counsel were of one mind. The whole thirty-eight were honourably acquitted. Smithson was

[1] Since pulled down.

complimented by the discerning judge, Sir Simon Le Blanc, on his clever amateur defence, and Sladen received a sharp reprimand for his want of judgment and over-zealous eagerness to convict, which had put the county to considerable expense.

Before they all quitted Lancaster on the 13th, they beheld a horrid spectacle—eight human forms with covered faces suspended from a gallows on the Castle walls, at the back, overlooking a hillside churchyard. They had been concerned in the Middleton and Manchester riots. And if ever men thanked God for unexpected deliverance, they did then. Their own escape had been little less than a miracle.

The home journey was a jubilee. The news had preceded them and created a reaction in their favour. They were met outside Manchester by a procession with bands and banners, and they who had left the town manacled and in ignominy, made a triumphal entry with flying colours and loud huzzas.

The letter of which the facts are here given, not the words, was written in high spirits, for David's employer had taken him back, and put him on better-class work, where he could earn more. He should have written long before, but for the shame of writing from a prison. If he had been condemned, nothing more would have been heard of him. Better have been mourned as dead than disgraced. He said that only for Charles Smithson he should have sunk under the shame; but, thanks to him, he had not spent his prison hours in vain repining, but in self-improvement. So he had turned a bad coat into a good waistcoat. He had been on thorns to know how all were at home, and if they were doing better since he had heard. Then he made many special and affectionate inquiries (not forgetting John Booth), and he urged Josiah to write him a long letter back.

Was this letter blurted out to Mrs. Hartland?

Nay; Josiah found it waiting him at night, and had barely mastered half its contents before the Watch and Ward came rapping peremptorily at the door, and demanded the extinction of his light, that of a common oil lamp by which the weaver plied his shuttle after dark.

At her son's request, Betty left her warps the next morning to gladden her poorer neighbours with the news that Josiah had had good tidings of their absent Davy; and, her errand

done, hurried back home to snub her little grandchild, and grumble that she was behindhand with her work.

That evening Lydia wondered why Josiah did not meet them as usual coming from the mill, and fancied all things but the fact that he was reading to her father and mother a missive from David, one, too, requiring so much careful preface.

Walter had listened, now pacing about the floor, anon propping up the jamb of the door, but keeping his face in shadow all the while.

The mother, sitting on a rickety chair, softened by a faded patchwork cushion, kept her ears attent, whilst tears streamed down her wan and sunken cheeks, uttering from time to time some brief ejaculation of horror or thanksgiving.

Once she interrupted the reading, wringing her hands, and crying out, 'Oh, them Ludds! them Ludds! theyn be th' ruin on us all! Jack transported, David in gaol, Tom flogged; theyn be layin' howd o' Wat next, an' be th' varry death o' him an' me! They're bigger tyrants than th' masters. Keep clear on 'em, 'Siah, for thy soul's sake! Theere's nowt but poverty, wretchedness, an' crime in theer track, an' the innocent suffer fur the guilty.'

Her words often recurred to Josiah in the aftertime. That night, after leaving the letter in the mother's lap, he hurried off to meet Lydia and Robby with his tidings. Eloquently grateful were the eyes and lips that thanked the messenger, as if he had created the news, not merely conveyed them. But Josiah felt sharp misgiving that only friendship governed looks or words, and he would fain have had a warmer advocate in Lydia's breast.

But she was young, and had not yet forgotten his friend, poor John Booth. He must wait.

CHAPTER X.

AT LAST.

WHETHER by singular coincidence, or as the result of mutual plotting, it had so happened that, the very night preceding the murder of Mr. Horsley, Nottingham had been startled by a corresponding attempt on the life of one of its principal hosiers, a Mr. William Trentham, and this not on a country road, but in the very heart of a populous, fairly-lighted town.

The hour was not late, for, although the unfortunate gentleman had been spending a convivial evening with friends in Market Street, the new regulations compelled all to be within doors long before ten o'clock. The guests left together, taking their several ways. He had companions across the Market Place and as far as the end of Warsar Gate. His own abode was an ancient mansion overlooking St. Mary's churchyard from an opposite corner, a house with a porch over the entrance.

Simultaneously with his knock at the door, some peculiar sound behind him caused him to turn sharply round. At that moment two short men sprang from their hiding-place behind a tomb, reached him before he had a suspicion, and on the instant one of them, without a spoken word, discharged a large horse-pistol at his breast point-blank.

The assassins separated and fled as Mr. Trentham fell against the opening door, and into the arms of a servant, herself too dazed and aghast to observe their flight.

Doctors were speedily in attendance, and the ball, which

had passed through the breast obliquely to the shoulder, was extracted; but recovery was for some time doubtful.

The echoes of the shot seemed to ring through the town.

Assassination was a new phase of Luddism. Breaking into houses and smashing frames was as nothing to this violent breaking in on the house of life and rending its delicate framework.

A body of hosiers, filled with horror, waited on the Mayor the next morning.

'Is every master compelled by necessity to reduce wages to be so shot down on his own threshold?' said they. 'It is monstrous! We must take steps to unearth the bloodthirsty villains.'

The step taken was a printed notice issued by the Mayor at once, offering a reward of a hundred guineas for the apprehension of either the assassin or his accomplice, and a further reward on conviction. Far and wide were these printed baits distributed, and one fell into the hands of Mr. Joseph Radcliffe.

Prior to that he had put *his* intention to practice, and had written to the Manchester deputy-constable.

Squire Radcliffe's application to Joel Sladen for advice was flattering to that burly, self-important individual's acknowledged astuteness. He was on the most comfortable of comfortable terms with himself. Not only had he the Middleton rioters, but the thirty-eight Luddites from the 'Cotton Tree,' safely under lock and key. He was anticipating a grand haul of blood-money, for be it told that informers, even when accomplices, on procuring the capital conviction of criminals, were allowed from £10 to £40 for each convict brought to the gallows; and it mattered little to the professional spy or informer whether the innocent suffered or the guilty. And if Sladen could not receive this money *ex officio*, he could share with his bloodhounds under the rose; but that he received it openly is no secret. Modern detectives are not so paid, and there is less hanging by wholesale. But then it was the practice, and Sladen was a rich man when he died.

His answer to Squire Radcliffe showed an insight into human nature—as he knew it.

'*Informers are always to be bought. Do not spare the rhino.*

A man would sell his own father for gold. I will find you a spy or two if you need them. A few guineas to stimulate their zeal will not be thrown away.'

Mr. Radcliffe took the hint anent paying for information, but not precisely as it was intended.

He followed the lead of the Mayor of Nottingham, and circulated posters and handbills offering rewards.

In both cases they were futile. The reading community was extremely limited. In many cases the handbills were little better than waste paper. The educated Luddites destroyed or pulled the printed bills down. The bribes were insufficient to tempt men to risk their own lives to obtain them. And so time brought no result.

Yet the Luddite raid for arms was so vigorously pressed in spite of Watch and Ward, or the official counter-demand for the surrender of private arms, and so certain were the authorities that a general insurrection was contemplated, and that the inscrutable Democratic Club at the 'Crispin' was the treasonable centre, that the magistrates and constables of Halifax, on the suggestion of Joshua Ingham the banker, decided to apply also to Mr. Sladen for the services of two Bow Street officers on whom they could rely.

The application was like a healing balsam to the wounded pride, prestige, and pocket of Sladen, still smarting from the sharpness of the judge's rebuke at Lancaster, and the escape of thirty-eight prisoners from the hangman's noose at one swoop. It had touched him where most vulnerable — his pocket.

Joel was himself again when a fresh application proved the extent of his fame, and that Yorkshire could not track its malcontents without his aid.

Two spies were duly despatched. As men seeking employment, they took up their abode at the 'St. Crispin,' were free of speech and pence to treat familiars. In the end one of them gained access to the guarded club-room, where old John Baines administered the Luddite oath to him, not without reluctance, having, as he admitted, 'heard there were spies from Bow Street in the town.'

The spies disappeared. But ere many days had gone by, the old hatter, two of his sons, and three other persons were in safe custody.

That was in July. Naturally it created a commotion in the Luddite camp, and the leaders were suspicious of traitors in their midst. Hartland's frequent absence from drill was commented upon, and, but that he was known to be in close attendance on his rapidly-declining wife, his doom would have been sealed by a Luddite bullet.

August came, with all the ripe promise of harvest, and Hartland hoped to gain in the harvest-field what his needle no longer supplied. Marian was ill, very ill. Benjy had found his way to Elland, and asked Dr. Hebblethwaite if one or two of his door-mats would pay for medicine for his mother. The doctor found medicine for the mother, and purchasers for Benjy's mats, but his 'Sad, very sad!' was said in confidence to his pony whenever he turned away from the poor home where secret grief and want of nourishment were hurrying disease to a climax.

One night, when all the children were in bed, Wat sat brooding by the fireless grate, wondering if that money locked up in Ingham's Bank could save his beloved one's life, and how he could obtain access to his brother—and some of the idle guineas. She was so ill that night he did not dare to leave her, although he knew there was a meeting on the moor two miles away.

All his light was a bit of rush candle in an iron candlestick, and an old blue woollen coverlet had been hung across the window as a screen. From some chink or aperture a ray of light must have streamed forth; keen eyes were there to see it.

There was a firm step on the path; a smart rap on the door. 'Why burns that light?' The Watch and Ward were there.

Wat opened the door humbly. 'My wife is very ill, sirs. I have to sit up and attend her,' he pleaded.

'You must put out the light!' was the peremptory order of officialism, which rarely makes exception or allowance, and the light was extinguished accordingly.

When, about an hour later, the poor woman moaned, and asked faintly for 'A drink o' water,' it took Wat quite a quarter of an hour before he could strike a light and obtain the coveted draught for parching lips.

Midnight approached. Other footsteps came stealthily up

the path. Ears preternaturally strained seemed to know the tread. There was a succession of low significant taps on the door, and both the hearers shuddered.

Again was the door opened, and, regardless of the sanctities of home and sickness, several men stalked in, headed by John Hill, whose brute nature was too well known to her.

A cry of agony escaped the sick wife as she beheld this man Hill lay his gaunt hand on Wat's shoulder, and caught the import of the brutal words, 'Th' roll has been called o'er to-neet, an' another black cross marks out thy name. Thou mun come wi' us, or thy doom is sealed.'

Then he unfolded one of those papers common as Luddite warnings, on which a skull and crossbones above a coffin were conspicuous. The light of the candle, placed on the hob to screen it from the Watch and Ward, fell full upon the paper.

There was a shriek from the bed. Marian had raised herself up, and, with eyeballs set, glared on the portentous scroll, then fell back in a deep swoon.

Without a word, her husband, frozen by despair, rose to his feet and approached the bed; as down-stairs came Lydia almost flying, her hair and dress all in disorder, and, snatching the mug of water from the table, began to bathe a brow scarcely more pallid than her own, her distracted cry of 'Mother! mother!' striking even the callous heart of Hill, and causing the intruders to slink away before the pitiful scene of conjugal suffering and filial affection.

They did not release the husband, whatever might be the wife's extremity. Barely had he ascertained that her pulse was still beating, than they signalled him away, and bade him 'take his arms.'

As if he had not heard, he walked away with them, silent as an animated statue, unarmed, no screen on a face known well for miles around as an itinerant tailor's.

In the house, Benjy had been called from his bed by the cry of his sister below, and for more than half an hour the two loving children were kept in an agony of fear lest the syncope would last for ever in spite of all their attempts at restoration.

Very feeble was Marian when animation was restored, scarcely able to swallow her medicine or the cup of tea Lydia

had lit the fire to prepare; but her eyes wandered about the room as if in search of the one who was not there.

It was quite four in the morning when he came in with steps that seemed to drag, and took Lydia's place by the bedside, silent, save that he lightly pressed the invalid's frail hand in his and held it there. His other hand, a wasted one, covered his eyes, and his head was bent; as if sorrow, shame, contrition, or all three, bowed him down and struck him dumb.

He loved his wife tenderly, and as he looked on her emaciated face and sunken eyes, something seemed to say, with endless iteration, 'This is thy doing.'

Where had he been during the dread hours Lydia and Benjy had watched there, with tear-dimmed eyes and tortured hearts, to hail as a relief the faintest sign of consciousness?

Over moor and moss, hill and hollow, where houses stood alone, the mandate of General Ludd had wrested arms and money from the terrified inmates. But never voice nor hand raised he in these demands. He had come to the conclusion that he would rather be shot for refusing to rob, than hanged for the attempt.

Amongst the homes disturbed was that of Mr. George Haigh, of Copley Gate, beyond Elland, a good house with a porch in front. Hill shouted to the sleepers in stentorian tones, 'Your arms, your arms! Open the door, or we will break it in!'

And then, with musket-butts began a battering at the doors both back and front that would surely have awakened the Seven Sleepers.

'Hollo! Hollo! Who's there? What do you want?' cried the voice of the master from the top of the stairs.

'My master, *General Ludd*, has sent me for your arms!' again roared Hill.

'I've nothing of the kind. For God's sake, do go home!'

'It's a lie! you have two guns and four pistols!' shouted Carter, who had been their guide, and again the hammering was renewed, with threats to break into the house and shoot them all if they were not quick. A pistol was fired at a window to give effect to the threat.

'Oh, maister, maister,' implored an apprentice within, whose name was Tillotson, 'do give them the gun, or they will shoot us!'

At that moment Job Hey struck at the kitchen door one heavy, imperative blow that broke the gun-stock in his hand.

The splintering of wood was suggestive of a yielding door.

'Give up the gun, Tillotson, and be hanged to them!' cried Mr. Haigh in alarm, from his harbour of safety on the stairhead.

Gun in hand, Tillotson rushed to open the kitchen door. In came a flood of moonlight, and four men, three with black masks. One of these roughly snatched the gun from the youth, who stood, with mouth agape, staring at the uncovered face of the fourth, who neither spoke nor raised a threatening hand.

After some rude hustling of the lad, and threatening argument, a pistol was added to the gun, and the men departed, leaving the butt-end of the broken musket outside the door.

'Hegh, maister! What dun you think? One o' them Ludds wur Hartland the tailor.'

'Art sure, lad?'

'Ay, I could tak my davy[1] on it.'

'Then he's done for.'

Done for, sure enough!

Soon after nine o'clock the following night, when Lydia was in the back kitchen, washing clothes at the end of her day's work at the mill, the tramp of men was heard on the stony path outside.

'Here's th' Watch an' Ward,' cried Benjy, who had just finished feeding his helpless mother with a little thin water gruel, from the general supper.

His father, sitting moodily staring at the dying embers in the grate, spoke never a word.

The sharp rap of a sword-hilt on the door.

'Open, in the King's name!'

Wondering what this might mean, Benjy drew back the wooden bolt, and stood transfixed.

A file of soldiers entered the house. 'You are our prisoner and the King's,' said the sergeant in command, laying his hand heavily on Hartland's shoulder. 'Officer, show your warrant.'

A constable stepped forward to exhibit a document, signed by Joseph Radcliffe and two other magistrates, authorising

[1] Affidavit.

the arrest of Walter Hartland, on the sworn testimony of John Tillotson, 'for that he, with several others, did forcibly enter the house of one George Haigh,' and so forth.

'Oh, Wat! Is *this* the end?' wailed a voice from the low bed in the corner. An attenuated hand pushed back the straggling hairs from a tense forehead. The sick woman strove to rise, but before Lydia or her husband could reach her, she had fallen back upon the pillow—*dead!*

'The worst is over,' said Wat, in a tone of utter hopelessness, relinquishing the limp hand that never more would respond to his warm touch.

Lydia had thrown herself on her knees by the bedside, with a sharp cry, and, hurriedly feeling for the pulsing of the heart that was still, sobbed aloud.

The sergeant tapped his prisoner on the shoulder. 'Come,' said he, and Hartland turned to obey.

Benjy and Lydia clung to their father. 'Oh, do not, do not take him to-neet,' cried they, in anguish.

'The soldier can but obey,' said the sergeant.

Hartland kissed his children; other hands released their frail but tenacious hold, and they, so young, were left alone with their sorrow—and their dead.

And through it all Silas and Robby had slept overhead, their double loss unknown.

Lydia and Benjy sat as if stunned; the awful presence of death chilling their young hearts; the terrible dread of their father's fate crushing them down.

They had sat there half an hour or more, only exchanging a word now and then, when rapid footsteps came through the garth, and in at the door left ajar.

Who but Betty Longmore, the ever-ready neighbour, and her equally ready son. The compassionate sergeant, at Hartland's agitated request, had knocked them up.

'God hath not left us friendless,' sobbed Lydia out on the rough woman's shoulder, while Josiah pressed her hand in mute sympathy. 'Yo are the only friends we hev now.'

Years had gone by since Betty had envied Marian Hartland her neat and comfortable home. The tables were turned indeed. Order and comfort had place on her own hearth, thanks to example and Josiah. She had only tender-hearted pity in her bosom now.

As for Josiah, he would have given his last coin, his last crust, to have brought a gleam of hope or consolation to the weeping girl. Yet he had not even a brother's right to take her in his arms, and let her sob her sorrow out there in this dire extremity.

He could but leave her with his mother, and, out in the garth with Benjy, listen to the boy's tale of unutterable woe; of the sleepless nights of terror, when rough men came and dragged his father away; of his mother swooning from affright; of the last midnight watch kept by Lydia and himself, and the fearful end that night, and, mingling his tears with the lad's, repeat, 'It is an overwhelming blow, how will the poor girl survive it? What *will* she do?'

He had long shared the general suspicion of his old master. Benjy's innocent confession had confirmed his suspicion that Hartland was an unwilling bond slave to that oath which had cost himself two brothers and two friends.

'Ah!' questioned he of his own heart, 'how is it this good man has been trapped, whilst the brutal murderers of Mr. Horsley are at large and unpunished?'

CHAPTER XI.

LYDIA AND THE LUDDS.

WALTER HARTLAND had not been captured more than two hours when the news, with all its attending horror, was carried to a special meeting of the Ludds at the Dumb Steeple, setting the leaders in a flutter.

Before the sun was well up in the sky, and whilst Lydia was in a maze of doubt and difficulty, a man, whose gruff voice the well knew, though a black mask concealed his features, came with one solution of the difficulty.

It had been proposed at the overnight meeting to provide funds for the decent burial of Mrs. Hartland, a little help for the children, and a lawyer for him on his trial, for the purpose of closing his mouth if he contemplated turning King's evidence, as some suggested so lukewarm a Ludd was likely to do.

The man had barely made his purpose known, jingling the money in his pocket as he spoke, than all the reserve forces in Lydia's nature seemed to give vitality to her frame, her eyes, her voice, as she confronted him.

'Look you *there!*' she cried, uncovering the sharply defined face of the dead. 'Look at your wicked work. You Ludds hev murdered her, inch by inch. It's all your doing. An' yo ax me to take money to bury our mother; take it from them as hev killed her; them as hev browt my good honest faither to jail, an' maybe the gallows,' and the girl wrung her hands as she said it. 'Go back an' tell them as sent yo, I'd rather beg the means to bury her from door to door; rather

dig her a grave with my own hands in our own garth than touch a penny of your blood-stained brass. Shu woddn't touch a penny o' your ill-gotten gains, an' noather will we. I'll plead her cause wi' God, an' He who buried Moses, an' sent ravens to feed Elijah, will find ways an' means fur us.'

The messenger perceptibly shrank before the honest indignation of the pale slim girl, worn with sorrow, overwork, and privation, a girl hitherto known as much for her reserve, as other factory lasses for their forwardness of speech and manner.

'Yo're a bowd lass,' said the emissary, taken aback; 'but goa down to th' factory, an' wait till yo're turned out for yor faither's Luddism. Yo'll noan be so boastful. An' when yo're out o' wark, an' when hunger pinches yo an' these bairns, yo may wish yo'd noan been so high an' mighty to them as meant well by yo. Goa an' see how mich yo get by begging.'

'Good Lord Almighty! Give me strength!' she had cried in her inmost soul whilst the tempter spoke, and the gold was spread out on his black palm before her. But from the man's very sneer a light broke in upon her.

'The factory!' he had said. Mr. Dacre's words came afresh to her mind. She would seek the help he had promised in her sore trouble.

Her only answer to the man was, 'Honest goodwill need not hide its face behind a mask. Go! I have heard your cruel voice before on this hearth. It threatened my father then. But no oath binds me to the Ludds, and I say, Go!' She pointed to the open door as she spoke, her whole frame set with determination.

The man turned on his heel, muttering his 'wonder if the lass could be reight in her head to refuse good money, an' fairly breighten at th' prospect o' no wark an' pinching want.'

The children had silently stared at the fellow, and Curly, shut up in the back kitchen, had growled all the time. Benjy, who alone comprehended his sister's rejection of the gold, had drawn to her side as if for her defence.

Here was a girl, a few months over sixteen, suddenly left to face the future and provide for her three brothers, with not a shilling in the house; her dead mother unburied; her father in a gaol; her own absence from home imperative; the difficulty of leaving four-year-old Silas alone in the house with Benjy and the silent clay, meeting her.

There was small time for sentiment or reflection. The poor cannot fold their hands and meditate. They must choke emotion down, and meet the duty nearest.

In a very short time their poor breakfast of oatcake and well-watered milk was despatched, the house door closed, Curly left outside, and the whole four were on their way down the hill; Lydia's nerves strung up to the occasion by the very interview with John Hill.

Josiah, contrary to custom, met them at the turn, and mounted Silas on his strong shoulders, to speed their steps.

'Lydia,' said he, as the two lads walked on before, 'I never had a sister of my own, but you have been better than a sister to me. You must let me do for you all that David would if he was here. Do not fret yourself about the funeral. You know I don't waste my money, and I think I can manage that.'

The genuine sympathy in his tone, the feeling that she was not wholly deserted, more than his words, affected her, and her tears flowed freely. She sobbed. 'Hegh, 'Siah! theere never wor such a friend as thee; John would ne'er ha' thowt'— and there she stopped short, as if perhaps she wronged the dead. 'But I hope I'll be able to manage without robbing thee. I'll get thee to write to David, if yo will. But dunnot ask him to come home, or they'd happen get hold on him too.'

And then she told of her morning visitor, and her rejection of his offer.

'I couldna ha' taken it, 'Siah, though I hadno sixpence in the house. I'd a felt as if I wor taking money for th' murder o' my mother and faither both.'

'It was a sore temptation, Lyd. You were a brave, honest lass for refusing. But you must let me help you what I can,' he urged.

'If my other plan fails,' she replied, 'and thankful.'

Silas was left to play with the weaver's fatherless grandson.

Benjy walked slowly on into the town with Josiah, when Lydia, with beating heart, turned off towards the guarded gates of the factory along with Rob.

The news had apparently not reached the mill. She and Rob went to their work as usual, he to his piecening, she to her sieve-carrying. The very poor cannot indulge in the

luxury of indolent grief. At the breakfast time she went in quest of her master, and found him.

The mill-owners of that day were not the unapproachable grandees of the present. In many ways they were much closer to their work-people.

'Well, my lass, what do you want?' he asked, looking at her steadily, but not unkindly.

'Have you not heard, sir,' she said timidly.

'Yes! I have heard. But *I* can do nothing. Your father will have to pay the penalty of his crime.'

'*Crime?* Oh, sir, you don't know. My father was'—

'I suppose you came to claim my promise; but I can do nothing for him—nothing,' interrupted he sturdily.

'It was not about him I came, sir,' she explained, her colour and her tears coming and going. 'But my mother, sir, died of the fright—and—and there are four of us, and'—

'You require means to bury her? Why don't the scoundrelly Ludds do it?' he interrogated sharply.

'They did offer, sir, this morning; but I would not have their money,' replied the girl proudly. 'They have been the death o' my mother, I know they have. We have not a shilling; but I did not come begging, sir, I'—

'Upon my word, you are a singular lass!' interrupted Mr. Dacre, after eyeing her curiously. 'Then what *do* you want?'

She told him as briefly as she could the story of the money in Ingham's Bank, and she said she was sure if she could be admitted to see her Uncle Tom, he would never refuse to get as much out of the bank as would help them, seeing that her father could have kept it all if he had been so minded.

Mr. Dacre, a kind-hearted man, touched with her distress, listened, took snuff, used his handkerchief vigorously, and as he listened became perplexed how a man of such singular honour as her father could descend to Luddism and crime. As he was asking a few questions relative to the family at home, he was called away on business, and left her with a hasty word that he would see what could be done.

The business detained him the whole of the morning. Noon called him, as well as his work-people, to dine. After dinner he walked into the town to perform his promise to the young woman who had saved his factory from destruction.

On reaching the temporary barracks, he discovered that

the Royal Buffs had taken possession, and the carabineers had marched out an hour before. Of course Tom Hartland had gone with his detachment.

Mr. Dacre was annoyed, and with himself. The girl's promptitude had saved his mill; his delay over dinner and dessert had put a fresh bar between the hapless young family and their soldier uncle.

To make amends, he hurried to the magistrate's room, hoping to obtain for the girl an interview with her father.

'You are too late, Mr. Dacre. The scoundrelly Luddite has been already examined and committed to York. And to prevent any attempt at rescue, we availed ourselves of the outgoing troops as an escort to Leeds. He will be taken thence by coach.'

'Quick work, Mr. Radcliffe, that.'

'Yes, sir, quick work is needed in times like these. It does not do to dally in such cases. Desperate characters are not to be dealt with daintily.'

'I wish I had not dallied,' said Mr. Dacre; and then he made the magistrate acquainted with the pathetic situation of Lydia, and the story of the money in the bank.

'Ah,' said Mr. Radcliffe, 'the truth of that is easily ascertained. Josh Ingham is a good friend of mine. You know the banker is in the Commission of the Peace. He often calls here on his way from Manchester to talk over Justice-room matters. I'll introduce the subject when next I see him. As for Walter Hartland, the man is certain to be hanged. I only wish we were as certain of trapping the rest of the gang.'

It was not pleasant for Mr. Dacre to go back and tell the expectant girl that he had been too late in each case.

'Gone! Both gone! What shall we do?' she exclaimed in blank and pitiable dismay, clasping her hands tightly, and standing for a moment as if stunned. Then, as if remembering something, she stammered out a few words of thanks, and was turning to leave the counting-house.

'Stay,' said Mr. Dacre. 'I can help you out of your present difficulty so far as money goes;' and he put five pounds into her hand, which she, all in a daze with grief and bewilderment, regarded with an air of incomprehensibility.

'All that? I'll never be able to pay it back, sir.'

'I don't want it back, my lass. You saved me much more than that.'

And whilst she, poor thing, struck with his munificence, strove in vain to give utterance to her depth of gratitude, he went on to say—

'All that can be done for you now, my good lass, will be to have an inquiry made for your uncle, but soldiers in these awfully unsettled times are shifted about so frequently it may take some time. I will not forget you. It will keep your brother out of mischief to stick to his piecening, but you need not come back to the mill until your mother is buried. You can go to the clerk for the wages due.' And there the prolonged colloquy between the master and his factory hand closed with her last word of thanks.

He had relieved his mind and hers at the same time.

Her pressing necessity was removed. Josiah saved her all unpleasant details possible, and sat up working night after night, with shaded windows, to provide Benjy and Robby with homely mourning, for which he would accept no payment.

In the midst of all her sorrow and responsibilities, she could but feel and weigh his gift against her master's, and balance them in the poorer man's favour.

'I never did nowt fur 'Siah,' she said to herself, 'an' he seems to think nowt too much he con do for me. Hegh! he's a downreight good friend; I dunnot know what we should ha' done without him;' and she sighed heavily, some lingering memory of 'John' rising and floating into hazy distance.

Letters written by Josiah went to Mary and David. Mary, neatly dressed in a few articles of mourning supplied by her good mistress, was at home a couple of days for the funeral, a second argument between Mr. and Mrs. Wainwright on the wisdom of retaining a Luddite's daughter in their household, whilst the Ludds kept him ever on tenterhooks, having ended as before. Mrs. Wainwright had no mind to visit the sin of the father on his child.

A sad meeting for the sisters, a sad parting. The mother in Stainland churchyard. The father in York Castle a prisoner. Their eldest brother far away. They, so young, left to do battle with the world, and brave its jecks and sneers as they best could. It was pitiable; but alas! Luddism had more than this to answer for.

With the removal of their dead the daily routine of life began again at Side-o'-Beck. From early morn until night Benjy and Silas were left alone in the desolate house, the very click of the hunchback's knitting-pins seeming to increase its wearisome solitude. It was a relief to sit outside in the sun, or to go about with Silas and his mats in the cart to sell them. In this he found Dr. Hebblethwaite a friend, so many of his patients took a fancy to his novel door-mats as time went on.

But what desolation could equal that of Hartland himself, incarcerated within the walls of York's grim old prison, with no prospect of release, no ability to write to child or friend; torn from home at the instant of his wife's dissolution, tortured with gloomy apprehensions of his children's unmerited suffering, the adder conscience for ever stinging with envenomed fangs! To his distracted brain it seemed as if 'Thy oath! thy oath!' glared upon him from the walls in letters of fire, and made it impossible for him to raise a single prayer to God.

He felt he had been snared by his tongue to his own undoing, and the misery of all who had loved and trusted him, those who should have had from him only comfort and support. The fetters on his limbs were not heavier than the fetters on his agonised soul. They mocked his misery with their clank. That he had speedily companions in his cell was no consolation to him.

How often his own son David's long imprisonment in such another fortress recurred to him! But he had not David's conscious innocence to sustain him.

His only hope now centred in that son and in Josiah as guardians for his young flock.

He might have had another hope, but even that had been barred by the new character he had earned. On the journey to Leeds he and his soldier brother had come together for a few minutes after four-and-twenty years' separation, but watchful eyes and ears were upon them; discipline recognises nothing but itself, and before he could commit his children to Tom's care, or give a proper account of the store awaiting the latter in Ingham's Bank, they were ordered apart, without even a hand-clasp.

No doubt the Luddites were rigorously treated before trial.

But those were not days when prisoners were tenderly dealt with, and insurgents had little favour to expect.

Letters from David and Josiah reached him in time to preserve him from going wholly mad, though the former cut him to the quick by his indignant assumption that, like himself, his father had been unjustly accused. It did not seem possible to David that his upright father could have part or lot with midnight marauders, and he had said so.

Josiah relieved the poor man's mind by showing that, bad as things were at Side-o'-Beck, the crisis had been tided over, and that he, Josiah, was a true friend in the worst of weather. The young man, nearly eight years older than David, promised to watch over Lydia and her brothers as if they were his own kin.

Josiah might have told him, had it not been a delicate subject, how all Huddersfield was excited over the arrest of his confederates, Job Hey and John Hill, on the information of the man Carter, who, finding himself suspected, had denounced them.

Before Josiah's letter was well spelled through, Wat had the two men for companions in his misery; but they were painfully associated in his mind with scenes of violence from which his soul recoiled, and with successive shocks to his good wife, resulting in her death. Of the two Hey was the less brutal, but, remembering what he did, he shrank from them both.

Luddite outrages did not cease, but the magistrates of the West Riding were on the *qui vive*, and congratulated themselves that one informer paved the way for others. Josh Ingham, the Halifax banker, frequently called on his brother justices in Huddersfield to talk over measures recently adopted —such, for instance, as forestalling the insurgents by sending troops to scour the country for arms, to prevent them falling into Luddite clutches; the offering of rewards for information, and so forth; and in the press of urgent magisterial matters, Hartland's money in the bank was lost sight of.

And never another offer of coin or help came to Lydia from the Ludds. Yet there were not wanting illiberal suggestions that their decent mourning and the mother's funeral 'wor all paid for wi' Luddite brass.'

CHAPTER XII.

THE VALUE OF THE OATH.

THE friends of the murdered Mr. Horsley had not remained quiescent. Bills offering large rewards had been posted up, and torn down. Fresh ones, increasing the reward, had been distributed. They availed no more than those of the Mayor of Nottingham for Mr. Trentham's assailants.

Then a surer means was adopted.

'Hegh! What's this?' cried Sowden, as he took up the *Leeds Mercury* at John Wood's. 'I say, Ben Walker, listen,' and then he read aloud:—'"Murder—£2000 Reward. The above sum will be given to any person, not being the actual murderer, who shall give such information as shall lead to the conviction of the murderer or murderers of Mr. William Horsley, merchant and manufacturer, of Marsden, near Huddersfield, in the county of York, who was shot down on the King's highway between Huddersfield and Marsden, about six o'clock on the afternoon of Tuesday, 28th April 1812. Signed, Joseph Radcliffe, J.P., John Scott, J.P., Huddersfield."'

Benjamin Walker, brushing an end of cloth on the stone, became nervous, and brushed the wrong way.

There was a pause. Sowden glanced curiously towards the young fellow, whose shifty eyes were still kept down.

'I say, dost see what thou'rt doing? Thou'rt brushing th' cloth th' wrang way,' cried the man.

'It's enoof to mak' one do owt wrang to listen to thy reading. Them Horsleys mean to get howd o' th' chap somehow. Dunnot yo read that out to th' rest o' th' lads. *Two thousand pounds!* It's a fortin as might tempt some on 'em. I dunnot feel my neck reight on my shoulders, tho' I wor not the one to fire.'

'Thou wert with them as *did* fire,' replied Sowden significantly, laying the newspaper down; 'but I say nowt.'

In another minute his coat was off, his shirt sleeves were rolled up, he had the great shears in hand, and was hard at work—hands, brain, and conscience.

Mellor took up the paper on his entrance, and scowled, but Sowden and Walker both noticed that the newspaper went into his jacket pocket out of sight.

That was Wednesday the 23rd.

When Walker came back to work after his dinner, Sowden remarked that he looked pale and queer.

'Good need,' was the answer; 'thy reading upset me.' And so agueish did he seem all the afternoon that no one was surprised he did not come back to the shop after the 'drinking.' Nor was he there the morning following.

'I'll go round to Walker's an' see what's the matter wi' Ben,' said Sowden, when he put on his coat at breakfast-time.

His so-called *inquiry for Ben* took him roundabout to the justice-room. The time had apparently come for him to have *his* 'say.'

Mellor had not superseded him and set him aside for 'nowt.' Two thousand pounds would pay for the risk he ran, and an oath taken or given by a timid man at a pistol's mouth would not count. So he argued.

To his surprise, Ben Walker had been before him. But his evidence was that of an accomplice, Joseph Sowden's was offered and taken as that of an independent witness, detesting crime, whose known timidity had hitherto kept his conscience and his tongue in check, and who was not an absolute accomplice.

In less than an hour the finishing shops of both Fisher and Wood were surrounded by soldiers. Handcuffed together, Mellor, Thorpe, and Smith were hurried away for ever from Longroyd Bridge, and a too-indulgent, frantic mother was left to tear her hair and shriek herself hoarse for the son whose ill-training had ended thus.

Confronted with his accusers, George Mellor quailed for the first time. 'He has done for me!' he exclaimed, with livid lips, at the first sight of Ben Walker, and refused to say another word after the evidence was read out.

As for sly Mr. John Wood, he held up his hands in pious horror, and repudiated all knowledge of Luddism or Luddite meetings on his premises. And he defied any one to say otherwise. 'He had too much business on his hands to notice comings and goings. With respect to his stepson, he had never been subject to control, and he had taken his fierce speeches as so much vapouring.'

He wiped his hands clean of the whole business, and went back composedly as might be to his own.

'Horsley's murderers are taken!' ran from lip to lip, and speedily all Yorkshire rang with the news—and not Yorkshire alone. There was gloom among the Luddites, and among the half-famishing creatures who trusted in them to create a new era of abundance for the poor. But the friends of the murdered man, and the manufacturers harassed with fears and night-watching of threatened mills, were jubilant.

Mr. Wainwright rode into Huddersfield at a gallop, to ascertain from the fountainhead if the news were true.

'Quite true, sir,' said Mr. Radcliffe. 'The three desperadoes are in irons, and on their way to York. Money did it, sir. "Every man has his price," as Walpole said; the two thousand arguments of the offered reward convinced an accomplice it was safer to betray than be betrayed. As I said to Josh Ingham last week, one informer paves the way for others. Buzz it well about Liversedge that there is a split in the Luddite camp, that the leaders are in custody, that informers go scot free and are well paid besides, and you will do more to detect the wretches who attacked your mill than Mr. Marston with all his military tactics. Some scoundrel will surely break his horrible oath to save his own neck.'

Back went Mr. Wainwright to act on instructions, talked openly in his house and in his mill; Janet gossiped with hawkers at the kitchen door; Mary, with the children by the hand, went open-mouthed with her news to other girls; workmen had their say over pipe and glass; and in less than a fortnight a Liversedge cropper went cringing to the Rev. Bertrand Marston, J.P., and bought his own safety

by selling the lives of others, certainly not much worse than himself, Jonathan Dean, the hammerman, among the number. He to whom, when a sick lad, Kate Thornicroft had carried wine and jelly.

The owner of the lost hat could now be found. A woman had already come forward to say that she had lent a hat to a man dripping wet and without one 'on the night of the Greenfolds stir.' Her husband's hat had been returned by a man through Wood's cropping shop, and the trail was broad to the owner Brook.

So many arrests were made that it was openly vaunted Luddism was at an end. Sixty-five of the brotherhood lay in York Castle awaiting the trials by special commission to begin on the sixth day of the new year.

Witnesses were no longer wanting. But it was not altogether safe to be a witness who knew too much, and was at the same time opposed to Luddism and the incarcerated leaders.

A parish clerk at Holmforth, who had refused to take the oath, was shot in the eye by an 'avenger,' on the mere suspicion of chattering to his neighbours.

As Joseph Mellor was crossing his own yard to his stables one night, a bullet whizzed past him, to his natural alarm. It shattered the lantern he carried, and lodged in the wall, and it scared Martha, his young wife; but it did not prevent him, his wife, and apprentice from starting the next week for York with the fatal evidence of the hidden pistols and changed overcoats, all of which were then in official hands.

Not that Joseph Mellor was eager to tighten the noose round the neck of George Mellor, but on Ben Walker's information, they, the landlady of the 'Red Cow' at Honley, Mr. Wood, and several others were served with subpœnas, and it was at their own peril if they failed to appear.

There was many a sweetheart and sister, many a mother and wife, on cottage hearths that Christmas time, sore-hearted and weeping for the bright lad of seventeen or the bread-winner of forty, who in the bitterness of their hearts lamented the delusion that had ended in separation and a gaol; many to whom the new year brought only disgrace and utter desolation, the orphanhood and widowhood of despair.

What must it have been to blithesome and light-hearted Mary to hear her master dilate on the coming trials, alternately

rejoicing that 'the ruffians would get their deserts,' and 'regretting that justice and the peace of the country demanded the sacrifice of so many lives,' accordingly as the feelings of the outraged mill-owner or of the warm-hearted man got the better of him?

Night after night she cried herself to sleep, thinking of her own father, and of the little likelihood she would ever see him again. And it was with a very rueful face she lifted up little Joe and his brother, about seven in the morning, to kiss their father as he sat in his saddle equipped for a smart ride to York.

'Master,' said she, her fine blue eyes swimming, 'if yo should happen to see my faither, would yo mind giving him my true love and duty, and say—and say'—but nothing more could she say for her sobs.

'He shall have your message, Mary, depend upon it;' and he rode away, sorry for the grief of the good little maid whose father was 'certain to be hanged.'

Mary was of a buoyant nature, had lively children to divert her attention, was away from old associations, was well fed, decently clothed, had no struggle for existence, and grief, never a perpetual cloud with her, had many alleviations. She would have sunk under the burden laid on the shoulders of poor Lydia and patient Benjy.

Three eventful months had gone by since father and mother had been sharply torn from them. Every fresh arrest came as a fresh reminder to Benjy, caretaker of Silas and the home on the lone moor, and to Lydia carrying and emptying her sieves of wool all day, or doing the work of house-mother morning and night. It did not trouble her so much to feed on dry bread or potatoes, with now and then a bit of cheese or a cup of watered milk for a change, as the dread and uncertainty about her father.

As the trial drew near, her craving to see him once more grew to intense agony, none the less overmastering because suppressed. What the issue of the trial would be she did not dare to contemplate. Hope and fear trembled like the needle on a pocket compass, though the pointer was steady to the biting north.

From the first she had determined she would go to York. But there were obstacles in the way, and she set herself to clear

them. Although out of Mr. Dacre's money she had sent a one-pound note to her father, she had reserved what she regarded as a sufficiency for her purpose, and also to maintain the lads in her absence. But how to leave home and those three for days together was her chief difficulty.

Josiah would smooth her way she knew, but instinctive delicacy forbade her acceptance of further obligations from him. She had begun to fear lest his goodness to them was bringing him into disgrace with his master, and she told herself and Benjy it was 'better to bear their own peck o' troubles than add it to the measure in 'Siah's sack.'

Towards the close of the year she got Benjy to write a letter to Mary, entreating her, if Mrs. Wainwright would give her leave, to come and stay at home, whilst she made an attempt to see their father.

The letter, written on another leaf of the old copybook and secured as before, was duly posted.

Unusually long on its way even for those slow times, it was not put into Mary's hand, on Wednesday, January 6th, until Mr. Wainwright had been gone many hours, and then it bore a suspicious aspect of having been opened.

Mary was not critical. She carried her treasure in hot haste to her kind-hearted mistress to be read. Had it contained treason, it would have been all the same.

'Mebbe they've let faither off,' cried the girl hopefully.

What was there about the letter that caused Mrs. Wainwright to turn it over and examine it so closely before opening, with so much astonishment in her countenance?

It was pathetic in its very simplicity, and went straight to the motherly woman's breast, whilst she could but respect Lydia for her delicate objection to trouble or compromise Josiah. But it was something more than that.

'I should like Mr. Wainwright to see how nicely your brother writes,' said Mary's mistress, refolding the letter and putting it in her pocket after giving the desired permission.

'You can remain until your sister returns home,' she added; 'and if you make haste, Tim can give you a lift as far as Elland, on his way to Halifax market.'

There was a basket ready for the cart, well filled by Janet with oddments that would be luxuries at Side-o'-Beck, and when warmly-clad Mary was herself ready, Mrs. Wainwright

put into her hands some money in a paper, and a warm if not new shawl, telling her—

'That will pay your poor sister's coach fare from Leeds, and this will serve to keep her from the biting cold by the way. The trials begin to-day, but Mr. Wainwright thinks your father's will not come on this week.'

She would have bidden the girl tell her sister to look out for Mr. Wainwright, and seek his influence to obtain admittance to her father, but she thought it better not to encourage false hopes, knowing how stringent and severe the ruling powers were against the Ludds—and *she* could not blame them.

In her gratitude Mary forgot all about her letter, but it went with others in a parcel to Mr. Wainwright at the 'Black Swan,' for his opinion thereon; and was accompanied by a pressing request from his wife that he would help Lydia, if he saw her, to an interview with her wretched father, if it were possible.

When Robby started for the factory on Friday morning, accompanied by Mary, as her sister's temporary substitute, Lydia, with Mrs. Wainwright's small woollen shawl under her mother's old grey cloak, set off on foot to find her way to Leeds, a distance of fifteen miles. She had never been so far in her life, but the road by Highfield End through Bradley Lane to Cooper's Bridge, if not a dead level, was tolerably direct.

It is astonishing, when the mind is on the greatest strain, how many trivial things attract attention. She noticed as she advanced that the hard ground was palpably softening, and that a thaw must have set in. Then a robin hopped before her as if in search of breakfast. Then the Dumb Steeple attracted her attention as a curious erection and a landmark, but of its association with Luddism or her father's unquiet dreams she had no inkling. A fingerpost set her right at the cross roads, and on she went steadily through village and town, obtaining a draught of buttermilk and some crisp haver-bread at a farm-house near Birstal, where she was glad of a seat. She had only walked eight miles, and began already to feel fatigued. But she shook off the weariness and trudged on sturdily. When within a mile of Morley, a sleety shower began to fall; then, fortunately, she was overtaken by a covered cart conveying witnesses to York.

She turned. The driver, who knew her face, called to her and offered her a seat for a small sum, an offer thankfully accepted. She thus escaped the rain and spared her limbs; but as she sat there silent and unknown, Tillotson, George Haigh's apprentice, recounted to his fellow-passengers the story of the raid on his master's premises. It was all new to Lydia; but every sentence seem to stab her afresh. Yet the weapon carried its own healing. The lad owned that though Wat Hartland was one of the gang, he neither raised voice nor hand to threaten or take. And he had always regarded him as an honest man until then.

'Oh,' thought she to herself, 'perhaps they will let faither off if he tells them that.'

It was market-day in Leeds. At any other time she would have been struck with the crowd coming and going along Briggate. Confined all day and all week in a moorland mill, what knew she of market-days or bustling streets? When the others alighted at the 'Angel' for refreshment, she sat still and ate her bread and cheese under cover of the cart-tilt, thankful to be alone. The driver must have been communicative over his ale, for when they came back, and the journey was resumed, she was subject to scrutiny and questioning that put her to intolerable torture.

Night had fallen when they entered York. It was well for Lydia's nerves.

At an earlier hour there had been a gruesome exhibition at the back of the Castle.

There had the three murderers of Mr. Horsley, Mellor, Thorpe, and Smith, in their heavy irons, hung suspended before a large multitude of spectators kept back by mounted troopers.

A short shrift and a long cord was truly the maxim of our forefathers.

Of what value had the *oath* on which they relied for security been to them? Self-preservation and cupidity had set its fiendish provisions at naught.

How must Mellor and his two companions at the bar have felt when, one after another, Ben Walker, Sowden, Hall, and others he had bound fast by fearsome oaths to penal silence, broke the seal on soul and lip, and one by one gave a fresh twist to the halters for which Ben Walker had supplied the verbal hemp!

In vain their counsel endeavoured to incriminate Sowden as a consenting party, a carrier of messages to and fro. He only elicited that the man had a timid disposition, had yielded to the compulsion of a loaded pistol in a determined hand, and had even then evaded the oath by pressing the book to his cheek instead of his lips; that he had adminstered the same oath to the lads and men under the same strong compulsion, and that fear had kept him silent afterwards.

A curl of contempt on Mellor's lips had marked his feeling as this bide-his-time coward justified his own information, but contempt must have given place to the bitterness of gall when his stepfather upon oath denied all knowledge of the plotting under his nose in his own premises, and when the cousin Joseph, whose well-meant advice he had spurned, was called into the witness-box, and followed by his wife and apprentice, all competent to testify to time and place, and to identify top-coats and Russian pistol then before the court.

That Mr. Parr, who had picked up the bleeding man and rebuked his assassin, should be there was no more than he had expected; but when the landlady of the 'Red Cow' at Honley was called, he must have felt that his very precaution had sealed the fate of his reluctant accomplice Smith.

Witness might follow witness after that for or against; Mellor saw but *one*, one not in the witness-box, whose sad and sunken eyes were set on his and never once relaxed their gaze. He saw a once buxom face, sharpened by pain and anguish, turned towards his with an expression of unutterable woe. It was but the face of a poor servant-maid, but one who had laid her heart under his feet, and now recoiled to discover what a monster she had set up as an idol to be worshipped.

If the cruel fate of John Booth could strike a warm spark from that flinty heart of his, surely the hammer of conscience must have beaten hard upon the flint, as he felt that he had added Susan to his many victims. There was no salving conscience with the argument that she had sought out him. He had been ready to caress and cajole her until he found her too obtuse or too incorruptible to serve his Luddite ends, and grew too great in his Generalship for alliance with a servant-girl.

Was it for her behoof, that he answered the clerk of arraigns—

'I am *not* guilty, sir; evidence has been given false against me.'

If so, Sir Simon Le Blanc—who tried the Luddite causes both in Lancaster and York—negatived his declaration most completely.

'It is not upon the testimony of one, two, or three witnesses that your guilt depends, and let me advise you not to lay that balm to your souls, that you have been deprived by false accusation and false oaths of your lives. A chain of circumstances has been discovered in the course of this trial which does not depend upon the oath of any one, or of two, or three men, whom you may denominate as bad as yourselves.'

Then, after long speaking, he added, with his eye fixed upon Mellor—

'In the shop where you worked some of you appear to have gained such an ascendency over the minds and over the consciences of the workmen, who were some degree under your control, that you could mould and fashion them to any wicked purpose you might imagine. Their eyes, I hope, will be opened to the fate which awaits you; they will see that though for a short time the career of the wicked may continue, yet the law is sure to overtake them.'

The turbulent heart of Mellor sent the hot blood surging to his brow at the exordium of the judge, prolonged far beyond our need to recall, and once more he turned his fiery black eyes to meet the questioning pair which seemed to probe his soul. There sat an ignorant girl over whom he had thought his influence unbounded; one he had found too innately good to be his tool or his accomplice. She had heard all, and sat there dumb and rigid, save for those cavernous eyes, and the burning spot that came and went upon the sharp cheekbone.

She would hear, too, the sentence that drove the blood back to the hearts of all three prisoners, and left them ashen pale; and if she made no sign, it must have been that sense was numb and paralysed.

And wonder not if those men who had dealt in havoc and bloodshed turned pale. An innocent man would shudder to be told that in thirty-eight hours he was to be 'hanged by the neck until he was dead, his body afterwards delivered to the surgeons to be dissected and anatomised, according to

the directions of the statute;' no marvel at its effect upon the *guilty.*

What ghosts must have haunted the solitary cell where Mellor, still fettered, and dieted on bread and water, spent the few intervening hours of his life? Could any belief in the cause of Luddism banish the bleeding spectres of John Booth and Harley, or his especial victim William Horsley? Must not the accusing wraiths of Hartland and the many slaves of his unholy oath then within those prison walls foredoomed to die, throng his narrow cell and make the silent darkness hideous?

Who shall know?

The still fettered felons joined in the prayers of the chaplain on the scaffold, but though each spoke a few words to the listening spectators, not one broke his Luddite oath to accuse a sworn brother.

All Mellor's address to the crowd outside the close line of soldiery, that seemed for the moment one huge ear, was this:—

'Some of my enemies may be here. If there be, I freely forgive them, and all the world, and I hope the world will forgive me.'

Had he caught sight of Wrigley's lithe form slinking among the people below that he spoke thus? for there the arch-wire-puller was, observant how *his* puppets played their parts, fearing lest his own share in Luddism might be revealed.

A woman's voice, shrill and penetrating, though full of agony, cleft the silence like an arrow.

'Thou's been thy own enemy, George! Pray God to forgive thee, as I do. An' may God forgive us all!'

Did the arrow reach his ear? Who can tell?

Caps were drawn down, halters adjusted.

There were a few shouts and execrations from the crowd—only a few.

Three bodies dangled in the air.

The men had sinned and led others into sin with a claptrap cry.

They had suffered for their sin, and were there strung up as scarecrows to deter others.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LAST WRENCH.

IF the horror had not come before Lydia's eyes, it assailed her ears on all sides. As the well-filled conveyance approached the city from the London Road, their progress was impeded by the crowd of strangers leaving it by the ancient Mickle Gate, some on foot, some on horseback, all of whom seemed occupied with the spectacle they had travelled miles to behold. And no sooner had they passed under the arch flanked by guardian towers, than it seemed as if the whole populace was astir and thought of nothing else. As they jolted on between the quaint overhanging timber houses of Briggate, or their newer companions of flint, as they rose slowly to the steep ascent of Old Ouse Bridge, and turned at a sharp angle to the right along Castlegate, men and women, some half drunk, shouted to each other, or jested loudly over the 'sight.'

Then hawkers of printed catchpennies bawled out here and there—

'The last dying speech and confession of the three Luddite murderers, Mellor, Thorpe, and Smith, hanged this day at York Castle. All for the low price of one ha'penny.'

It was terrible. The girl's every sense was alive to feel acutely that so her own father's once-honoured name might be bandied about, a theme for printed lies and coarse ribaldry.

As the covered cart stopped at a small inn near the corner of Tower Street, which the driver told them was close to the Castle, and while the pain was fresh, a burly, self-important

individual, in a high-collared drab topcoat that came almost to his ankles, studded with immense pearl buttons, like great staring eyes, jostled the alighting passengers off the narrow footpath as he strode along, with two cringing followers in his rear.

What would she have thought or felt had she known them for Joel Sladen and his two obsequious spies; the three who had so very nearly compassed the ruin of her brother David and his companions?

Five men had to thank them that day for seven years' transportation each, for 'administering and taking an unlawful oath'—John Baines the hatter and his son John foremost in the group. And if the old man's youngest son Zachary had been acquitted, it was due to the compassion of judge and jury on the lad's tender years, and not to any compunction of the hard-swearing informers who took oaths and broke them with equal facility, who first entrapped men into offences, and then became their sworn accusers. Such had been their avowed procedure in this case to obtain evidence, and they plumed themselves upon it as proving their keenness of scent and their crafty diplomacy. Perjury with them was policy.

Two respectable women, named Naylor and Mills, had travelled with Lydia, witnesses in the Greenfolds case, the former being the one who had lent her hat to the 'dripping wet' Thomas Brook. Before the conveyance stopped, Lydia had, with some timidity, begged to lodge along with them. 'She was afraid to be left alone in a strange place.' And seeing that she was a modest, well-behaved girl, after a little hesitation, they consented. Their business lay with the Crown lawyers. In the morning they compassionately offered to say a word to obtain her admission to her father; and she lingered about the Castle gate, but no message came. At last she ventured to importune the warder, only to meet with a surly rebuff.

On the Sunday, Mrs. Naylor and Mrs. Mills would have persuaded her to go about with them to admire the wonders of the ancient city, from the grand old Minster to the battlemented walls and barbacaned gateways; but the prison at the base of Clifford's ruined tower held all she longed to see. To and fro she walked almost like one distraught, watching if any one came in or out likely to hear a daughter's petition

for a sight of her father, only retiring when the day was done and hope was gone.

Monday morning saw her again at her post, and now came a thin stream of people for whom the gate seemed to stand open. At last she espied the lad Tillotson, and sprang towards him.

'Oh,' she cried, 'I want to see my faither! Con yo help me to see my faither?'

'Why, ay, lass; he's to be tried to-day. Court's open, yo can hear him tried if yo like. Come along o' me.'

'Tried? Hear him tried?' Was that the only way she could get a sight of him? Her head swam, her heart sank, but she kept close by the youth on whose testimony depended her father's life or death. Better to see him tried than not to see him at all, and to remain in the agony of suspense.

At the court-house he bade her follow the crowd, and so she got into the court, jammed into a corner, whence there was no escape.

Judge (the same Sir Simon Le Blanc who had tried David), counsel, jury, filed in and took their places. Three prisoners were placed at the bar, John Hill, Job Hey, and Walter Hartland. As the haggard features of Hartland appeared, a shriek of 'Faither! dear faither!' rang through the court. There was a hubbub in the court.

A demand for 'Order!'

'A woman's fainted,' called out a voice.

'Remove the woman.'

The woman was removed—not too gently—and carried to an anteroom, the crowd with difficulty making way for her removal. And then the prisoner himself appeared about to faint—a warder had to support him.

At the same moment a gentleman, seated opposite, rose and passed out—Mr. Wainwright of Greenfolds.

He was in York, along with other manufacturers, watching the trials, and waiting to give evidence in his own Greenfolds case against 'Haigh and others.' Mellor and Thorpe had already passed out of this case into eternity. He had been on the lookout for this girl Lydia. His 'gallant defence' had made him one of the heroes of the hour. His influence procured her some attention.

When she revived, and heard him spoken to by name, she

fell on her knees and implored him pitifully to obtain her an interview with her father.

'I'll see what can be done, my good lass, and I'll say what I can for your father. Tell me where you are staying; but do go away now, and you shall hear from me. You can do no good by remaining here.'

Lydia obeyed, meekly and confidingly, but the suspense was awful to her. Much of the interval she spent upon her knees, though her prayers were but broken utterances and wild beseechings from parched lips and throat.

Mr. Wainwright kept his word, although he learned that one of the charges against the prisoner was the breaking of his own shears on the way to be ground, a charge not substantiated.

He voluntarily bore testimony to Hartland's well-known character as an upright and industrious man, overtaken by misfortune and poverty.

But no previous good character could outweigh the evidence of Tillotson, the apprentice, and of Carter, the informer, a man who had turned King's evidence, and proved that Hartland was *one of the party* who forcibly entered the house of George Haigh at Copley Gate and carried off the owner's gun with violent threats. And though it was also proved that John Hill and Job Hey were the actual aggressors, and that Walter Hartland neither raised voice nor hand to threaten or to take, his presence as a consenting party brought him under the same condemnation.

Without quitting the court, the jury pronounced all three 'Guilty,' and that verdict at that time meant DEATH. But death unaccompanied by the after-horror of dissection.

Mr. Wainwright, as he had promised, obtained permission for Lydia to see the condemned felon the following day; but Hartland himself, in an agony of shame and remorse, begged that he might be spared that second trial. Her outcry in the court had utterly unnerved him.

'My man,' said the gentleman, 'I hear that the poor lass is almost distracted; she has been importuning the warders for three days to see you. If you deny her, I will not answer for the consequences.'

'Well, well,' said Hartland, 'it may ease the poor thing's mind; but the wrench will be terrible.'

It was a sacred, solemn interview. Loaded with irons, disgraced as he was in the eyes of the world, his daughter kissed him, clung to him, wept over him, gave the farewell messages of sister and brothers, and promised to be a mother to the little ones. But leave him she could not. The warders had to unclasp her clinging hands and remove her by main force.

'Gentlemen,' said he in half-choked tones to those who stood around, for there was no privacy, 'I hope yo will mak' it known that I hev six children, and they will hev no mother but that young lass. I leave them as a legacy to my countrymen.'

He made a like address from the gallows on the following Saturday, when no fewer than fourteen men and boys were executed on the one day.

Eight of them suffered for the affray at Greenfolds.

Amongst this second group appeared Jonathan Dean; Thomas Brook, who lost his hat in the goyt; and John Walker, who shot Mr. Wainwright's faithful and valuable dog.

Benjamin Walker, in saving his own neck and clutching at the golden reward, had unthinkingly fitted a noose round the neck of his only brother! Will any one envy that man his gains or his conscience?

Of those unfortunate sufferers, doomed by the statutes of their time to pay with their lives the penalty of crimes they falsely regarded as justifiable means to a great end, how many were the bond slaves and victims of John Baines and George Mellor? How many had been entrapped as was Wat Hartland? How few were animated with a truly patriotic, unselfish zeal to serve their suffering fellow-men? Yet such there were, no doubt, or the movement would neither have spread so far nor died so hardly.

. . . . . .

Walter Hartland had left his children to the care of his countrymen.

Who was likely to accept the onerous legacy?

Only a few years previously, Lord Nelson, dying in the very flush of victory, had left his daughter Horatia to his country.

If an ungracious country ignored the legacy of the victorious Admiral, which of his countrymen could be expected to step

forward and claim the privilege of adopting the family of a poor Luddite tailor, dying by the hand of the common hangman?

When Lydia was torn from the last embrace of her agonised and despairing father, she was borne away, convulsively weeping, to a warder's room to compose herself.

Awaiting her there, in his new mourning suit, stood Josiah, a firmly-built, good-looking, clear-eyed young fellow, with a thoroughly dependable bearing.

'Oh, 'Siah,' cried Lydia, 'this is terrible!' and would have fallen, but he caught her, and then, regardless of all around, she sobbed out her grief on his shoulder.

'You should not have come hither alone, my poor lass,' said he gently, but gravely. 'It was too much for your strength. Could you not trust me as David's deputy? I would have taken care of you. It must, indeed, have been a cruelly trying time. My heart has ached for you.'

'Trust yo, 'Siah?' she sobbed out. 'It seems as if theere wor nobody else on earth one con trust. I'm fair broken-hearted.'

It was a trying time for both of them. But he felt that she clung to him as the drowning seaman to the jutting rock, her only hope and stay, and that consciousness was reward enough for him.

He led her forth into the open air, beyond the precincts of the Castle, and away to the almost deserted city walls, saying little, but yet sufficient, to subdue her passionate outburst of grief. Gradually he brought her into a calmer frame of mind, she clinging to his arm as if he were indeed her only friend on earth. If he knew himself to be more her friend than a friend, she did not, and that was neither time nor place for the revelation.

Leaning to rest against an embrasure in the ancient wall, with the Minster and Clifford's white tower both in view, he endeavoured to wean her from her purpose to remain near her father to the last. It was some time before he succeeded in persuading her that she was only prolonging her own misery and fulfilling no duty. His chief anxiety was to spare her the shock of the final catastrophe.

He was but a working man, if he had raised himself by persevering study and good conduct above his fellows; but he

had just and true perceptions, and as fine feelings as any of his master's patrons with whom he came in contact. At the same time he had a firm tenacity of purpose, and at length Lydia resigned herself to his leading.

'Dear Lydia,' he had said at last, 'I know it is hard for you to leave your poor father to his sad fate, and it cuts me to the soul to see you so broken-hearted, but, my dear lass, you know you promised to be a mother to the children at home; and do you think your mother would have left her little ones to fret and pine by themselves day and night, one moment longer than she could have helped? Think of them, my poor Lyd, and how hard it will be if some one blurts out the awful verdict in their hearing unkindly or without care.'

Lydia opened her eyes and drew in her breath as he went on.

'It would be a worse trouble to you afterwards to think you might have done it more cautiously if you had gone home sooner.'

He had found the right argument.

'Ay, 'Siah, so it would;' and she sighed heavily. 'But yo shall hev no need to remind me of that promise again. I mun think o' the bairns whatever comes or goas. They'll ha' no one but me to look after them now, while Davy's away;' and, wiping her eyes, leaving her assent to be understood, she turned eagerly from the spot.

'That's a good lass!' cried Josiah approvingly. 'I knew you would think of the bairns. But you must not talk of being alone. I will do whatever I can for you or for them—and so will my mother,' he put in. 'You must not feel yourself deserted.'

'Oh, I know yo'd never desert us, Josiah,'. fell from her with such sisterly confidence as he led her away, he hardly knew whether it gave him more pleasure or pain.

Strangely enough, there was another couple within a hundred yards of them on those same embattled walls, with the back of the Castle full in their view, where one urged and another refused to leave the walls and the town that day.

One was a youth about fifteen, with the marks of recent tribulation and dread in every line of his face.

The other, a young woman, whose six-and-twenty years might have been mistaken for six-and-thirty, such havoc had the

burning fire of misplaced affection and confidence made of her face and form.

'Do, Susan, lass, come away. Let us both go back to Halifax this very day. You'll lose your place at the "Crispin" if you don't go back right off,' he pleaded urgently.

'Let th' place goa. What hes th' "Crispin" browt to me but misery? What did it bring to George Mellor? He wor but a masterful lad, driven from home by a cruel stepfaither till yor faither browt him theere, and made him worse nor masterful. I tell yo, Zack, yor faither browt George to the gallows, the only chap as ever said a loving word to poor Sue. I saw the mon I loved better nor owt, bad as he wur, strung up theere like a dog. An' I mean to stay on these walls till I see owd John Baines hangin' on the same gallows.'

As she spoke, the woman folded her arms defiantly, her nostrils panted, her cheek glowed, and her sunken eyes gleamed with unnatural fire.

'Hegh, Susan! I never thought you could be so cruel and hard-hearted. You were always so kind to me. I fancied you would be pleased to hear I had got off. When I had my own clothes given back, and I walked out of prison *free*, I thought there was not a soul in all York as cared for me but the old father and the brother I was bound to leave behind. My heart gave a great leap when I spied you by the Castle gates, for I thought you would feel sorry for us all; and we might go back to Halifax together.' And the fifteen-year-old lad looked dejected and disconsolate.

'Yo mun bide *my* time or goa hoam by yorsen, Zack. I *stay here* to see John Baines hanged where I saw my love hang.' And there was a dogged something in her tone which told of a purpose not to be changed.

'Oh, Susan!' The big lad laid his face in his hand on the stone battlement, and, sobbing bitterly, in broken gasps jerked out, 'I never thought to hear such cruel words from you. I shall never see my father's white head again, I know—but—but—he's not going to be hanged! He an' John are both to be transported to Botany Bay for seven years.'

'Not hanged? not hanged?' she almost screamed. 'Then theere's no such thing as justice! Come along, lad,' she added, with sudden change of tone and purpose, 'an' let's be gone from this wicked place, wheere they let the hoary-

headed plotter 'scape the rope, an' hang th' tools he sharpened an' used. It's enough to turn a simple woman's brain. But coom away, lad, coom. I caunt bide here an' think on it. But, oh, Zack,' she implored, 'do thou tak' warning, an' ha' nowt to do with Ludds, or oaths, or owt but what's fair an' true an' aboveboard. Do thy duty, my lad, to God an' to thy maister, an' as long as my broken heart has a beat left in it, I'll be thy friend. I'll try, lad, I'll try ne'er to throw up thy faither in thy teeth again, fur I'se sorry for *thee*, Zack, I is.'

And back they two went at six the next morning by the 'Eclipse' mail coach, which passed through Halifax *en route* for Manchester; Susan with a new purpose before her to steady her reeling brain, in the preservation of young Zachary Baines from the consequences of his father's evil training, lest the bright lad should fall as John Booth and Mellor had fallen; Zachary to lean on the humble servant lass who held up the light of practical religion for him to walk by, and never after that one feverish outburst on the walls of York twitted him with his father's or brother's disgrace, as so many were apt to do, though he was by no means without sympathisers.

As for him, his narrow escape was a warning and a safeguard.

It is to be hoped that the many others who were mercifully discharged at that dread assize were as little culpable, and kept out of like danger in the future, seeing that their General Ludd was no longer living to coerce them.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DAWN OF A NEW DAY.

WHILST the Halifax coach was whirling Zachary Baines and half-demented Susan to their destination and out of this story, the Newcastle stage 'Wellington' was as rapidly bearing Josiah and Lydia to Huddersfield. And it set them down at the 'Woolpack,' equally unconsious that Sladen and his two myrmidons had been their fellow-passengers, and were on their way to Manchester well satisfied with their own work. Josiah, more than brother, had taken all the care of her he could during the long journey, not only to protect her from cold, but from observation, securing the two seats opposite to the guard as a security alike from the cutting wind and from intrusion.

It was almost nightfall when they reached Side-o'-Beck.' Josiah having first reported himself to Mr. Sykes as a duty, and afterwards given Lydia a temporary rest at his father's cottage, as a sort of preparation for home questioning.

A look from her son conveyed the worst news to Betty and his father; and they made no painful allusions, though they were extra kind, and told her all had gone well at home in her absence.

But neither prepared her for the surprise awaiting Lydia there.

Seated on the hearth was a stranger, evidently making herself perfectly at home. She was decently attired in black, not altogether new, and as they entered, set aside a lace-cushion, warned by Curly's demonstrative leaping and barking to rise and greet the new-comers.

Benjy and Silas were before her, hurrying out into the garth with Curly at their heels.

There were no telegraph wires to flash intelligence in advance, and Benjy had an eager question on his tongue, but Josiah, in the rear, put his finger on his lips significantly, and patient, self-restrained Benjamin kissed his sad-eyed sister without a word to trouble her. But he stayed behind to learn from Josiah all that had to be told of his poor father.

Little Silas, in the happy ignorance of childhood, met his sister's sober salute with the exclamation, 'Aunt Patty is here from Nottingham. Shu hes coom to stay wi' us.'

'Stay with us?' ejaculated Lydia, not a little dismayed at the inopportune intrusion, and making a momentary pause before she went indoors.

It was not a joyous meeting. Lydia at first felt she would rather not have had a stranger there to mingle with their great sorrow.

Something of this must have been visible in her face or in the constraint of her first salutation, for Patty, divining the worst from the deep sorrow in her face and voice, answered her looks more than her words.

'My dear lass, I see you are down-hearted and daunted by my coming in the very midst of your heart-breaking trouble. But it was that very trouble stirred me to come here and try to lessen it for you.'

Here Lydia's tears began to fall; she sat down covering her face with her hands, sobbing silently.

Patty knelt down beside her. 'Lydia, lass,' she said quietly, 'I've a sorrow in my heart almost as great as yours. My little lad, not so big as Silas here, lies under the turf in Arnold Churchyard. He was ill and half-famished before I dared ask your uncle Robin to take us in, and—and—nothing they could do then could save him for me.'

Her eyes were as full as Lydia's then, and poor Silas, bewildered and ready to cry himself, clung to both.

Patty Greenwood went on hurriedly: 'I suppose you know that your Uncle John was transported to Botany Bay for frame-breaking and rioting, and that I, too, am alone in the world now. My father cast me off when I married him, and my bad brother Joe, as led John into Luddism, set my father against us.'

'No, sure!' gasped Lydia in wonderment and sympathy; her aunt's sorrow apparently bringing her nearer. 'It's the first I've heard on it. But I'm sorry fur yo, aunt. Sit yo down. Yo can bide here an' welcome. What we hev, we can share.'

'Ay,' cried the other, a light breaking over her sad countenance, once so bright and sparkling, 'we can share. But I'm not likely to be a burden on you. I can earn my own living wi' my lace-cushion in spite of the machines, an' mappen better here than in Nottingham. I hope I shall be a help, not a hindrance to you. And there will be no one here to fling my husband's Luddism in my face at every turn. It was Robin as heard of your great calamity, and he and Nell both said it might ease my loneliness, and be a comfort to poor Marian's children, if I came here and did my best to be a mother to you all. And though I never had your poor mother's good teaching, I will try, if you will let me.'

There was no doubt of her welcome after that.

When Josiah came in with Benjy, Lydia and her aunt were in each other's arms. He had heard just enough to understand the situation.

He went away very soon, hoping to meet Mary and Robby on their way from the mill, and to spare Lydia the pain of telling their father's doom. But before he went, he shook hands with Mrs. Greenwood very heartily, and said he was glad she had come to cheer them all.

He did not say so, but it was consoling to him that Lydia's loneliness and overwork would be at an end. And if he sent Mary and Robby home saddened and subdued, he knew their weeping would be well-nigh over before they reached the cottage, and that Lydia's wound would not have to be opened afresh to them.

Saturday was a day of sorrow for them all, and for many besides them. Walter Hartland was to be that day hanged, but he was only one of *fourteen* who dangled in parties of seven from the York gallows. There were wives and mothers, sons and daughters, and a babe unborn, left to rue the hour when their bread-winners were entrapped by frothy demagogues to their own destruction. But people whose daily needs necessitate constant work, cannot sit still and brood. The inevitable comes, and has to be borne.

Aunt Patty had been toned down by her own troubles not to jar their feelings by her lightness. She and they were mutually content. Silas was delighted with her, she made so much more of him than of the rest.

On the following Tuesday, Mary went back to Greenfolds in the finisher's new van, the shade of sadness on her usually merry face making Tim the driver more than ordinarily kind to the orphaned girl.

But it was not in her nature to be melancholy. Once back with the children, their frolics chased the gloomy shadows from her sky, and though sobered a little by recent occurrences, she neither moped nor mourned to the discomfort of others, and very soon was pretty nearly her old self.

Neither Mrs. Wainwright nor Janet disturbed her with bitter allusions.

On that same Tuesday, Mr. Wainwright and Mr. Dacre met by appointment in Mr. Radcliffe's private room, literally to compare notes.

Benjamin's letter to his sister Mary had been (under instruction) sent by the postmaster to the vigilant magistrate, with the information that the same little hunchback, with a younger boy in a dogcart, who had posted the one for Mr. Dacre, had posted that—a fact ascertained by the observation of the woman cleaning the window above in the first instance.

Mr. Radcliffe had compared it with the two warnings lodged in his hands by the two mill-owners, and was afraid they had been overhasty in condemning Hartland if those warnings emanated from him.

'They do not,' said Mr. Wainwright. 'I was in hopes to serve the man if they had, but he honestly denied all knowledge of them, although he thought the writing must have been his crippled boy's.'

'Well,' observed Mr. Dacre, 'had it not been for that special warning, I should not have taken any precautions against fire, even supposing I had thought of guarding my factory at all. And certainly, if buckets of water had not been close at hand when Hartland's daughter gave the alarm, the fire might have raged unchecked. It is strange, if she knew of any written warning, she did not refer to it when she came begging my intercession to see her uncle, the corporal.'

'Suppose we send for the lad and his sister?' suggested Mr. Radcliffe.

'Not to-day,' replied Mr. Wainwright hastily. 'I dare not ride home in the twilight. Revenge may select me for a target a second time if I do.'

The following Tuesday, much to their consternation, Benjy and Lydia also, were summoned to the magistrate's parlour. There the boy was closely questioned. He answered truly, and truth served him well.

They went home in high glee. Mr. Dacre had offered to employ him as an assistant book-keeper. It was a prospect of independence.

Mr. Wainwright volunteered, when Silas was a year older, to get him into a free school, where he would be clothed, fed, and instructed.

Then it was Lydia recognised with thankfulness how providential had been the coming of Aunt Patty.

Benjy could not have accepted the offered situation had there been no one at home to look after Silas.

She had other reasons to be glad of Mrs. Greenwood's presence. Not only was the sparely furnished house kept in decent order, but her aunt had been in some sort educated, and seconded the girl's desire to improve herself in spare half-hours, few though they were.

As misfortunes never come singly, so it is with blessings.

Some months later, David, who appeared to be gaining favour with his employer, was sent by him to measure an officer's son at the cavalry barracks for a boy's ordinary suit.

As he crossed the barrack yard, he was stopped by a carabineer at whom he had stared, and who had repaid the stare with interest. Each had recognised a likeness to a dear relation.

'I say, young man, what's your name?'

'David Hartland,' was the prompt reply.

'Then you come from Side-o'-Beck?' cried the soldier excitedly. 'You're the very marrow of my brother Wat, as he was when I left home!'

'Hegh! surely you're never Uncle Tom?' was David's ejaculation. 'But I don't know whether you favour father or grandfather most.'

Yes, it was Uncle Tom found once more, and hands were grasped in hearty gladness.

The corporal was off duty, and he walked into the town with his newly-discovered nephew. The barracks were situated at Hulme, a mile and a half from St. Ann's Square, the centre of the town.

During the walk he learned from David, not only the unfortunate end of his only brother, but the full particulars respecting the money lying idle in Ingham's Bank, and the sore straits from which it might have saved the whole family.

'Why, lad,' said he cheerily, 'I have no use for the money. I'd have told thy father so if I'd had the chance. I'm fit for nowt but a soldier now, an' the King finds me all I want. Ask thy master how we can manage to get at the cash. It might set thee up in business when thou'rt of age.'

David, rejoicing at the prospect, consulted his friend Peter Toft,—who had a sister very much to his liking,—but Peter knew nothing of either banks or bankers. But David's master did, and surprised him with the information that Mr. Joshua Ingham, or his partner, was to be found at a given place near the Exchange every Tuesday, the mercantile market-day.

Mr. Radcliffe, moved by Mr. Dacre, had already spoken to Mr. Ingham, and when, after one or two disappointments in meeting only with his deputy, they found the hearty Halifax banker himself, the business was soon settled, Tom Hartland stripping his scored shoulders bare to prove his identity.

'Now, sir,' he asked, 'can you make it so that this lad, my good brother's eldest son, can draw the money when he is of age? That will be two year come November. He can write, and I can only make a mark. And we soldiers are here to-day, and gone to-morrow. There is no knowing where I might be when he wanted it. And, pray, sir, how much is there?'

Mr. Radcliffe's inquiry had already sent the banker to his books. He answered promptly, 'The money has lain in the bank so long that with accumulated interest there will be close upon sixty pounds two years hence. Would you like to draw upon it now?'

'Ye—es, I think I may as well ha' seven pound. I shall know then as it's real.'

He had the seven pounds in the banker's own notes. Mr. Ingham obtained David's signature and address, as well as the mark of the corporal, and the transfer was duly registered.

Of the seven pounds, Corporal Hartland retained one to

treat his comrades; another he gave to David; a five-pound note went with his love to Lydia for his nieces and nephews in Yorkshire, and was hailed by them as a godsend, Benjamin penning a neat letter of thanks in the name of the rest.

The mourning of young people, however deep and sincere, cannot last for ever. As the cloud of extreme poverty lifted from their desolated home, and rays of promise streamed in upon them through windows no longer stuffed with rags, the countenance of Lydia once more brightened in its sunshine. She still went to and from the mill, and worked hard all the day, as did Robby and Benjy; but when she came home tired at night, there was no additional work to be done. There was a clean hearth and a comfortable meal, as in the old days when her mother still retained strength for housewifely duties. And though there was no margin for anything but strict frugality, they were no longer pinched with gnawing hunger. The worn and jaded lines disappeared from her face as the months wore themselves away; and the presence of Aunt Patty (whose lace found purchasers in the town and neighbourhood) was at once refreshing and consoling.

There was another presence under the old roof tending to dissipate gloom and promote cheerfulness.

Josiah Longmore found his way to Side-o'-Beck and to Stainland Church as of old, not displeased to have Mrs. Greenwood there also to close the lips of gossip.

To say that he was welcome is superfluous. He was looked for, expected, and by none more eagerly than Lydia, who turned to him for counsel and advice in every difficulty, and began when he came to have a glow upon her cheek not brought by the moorland breezes. Strangely enough, there came a time when she and Josiah seemed to drop their voices when speaking to each other; to shake hands at meeting and parting, and to linger over it; and one night Robby averred to Benjamin on their way from the mill that Josiah had his arm round Lydia's waist as they came over the moor together, and that he kissed her at the gate. It might be so, but there was only Robby's word for it, and evening shadows are deceptive.

It is, however, certain that somewhere about that time, Lydia, recognising some fresh kindness of his, exclaimed involuntarily, for the hundredth time, 'Hegh, 'Siah! there never was such a

friend as yo! Yo're better to us than our brother Davy. An' I never have a chance of making any return.

'Would you take a chance if I gave it you?' asked Josiah, all his heart in his mouth.

'Would I? Ah, that I would,' she answered, with unsuspicious promptitude.

'Lydia, dear, I have loved you all your life. If you could give me your love, and be my wife, you would return all I have done for you a thousandfold.' And holding her hand in both of his, he looked into her face for his answer, as if his life depended on it.

She was dumb with surprise. If the earth had opened at her feet, she could scarcely have been more staggered.

'Oh, 'Siah, I never thought—I'd no idea—but oh, 'Siah, I do love yo better than all the world! I'm sure I do. An' if'—

There was no need of more; he kissed her hands, and might have kissed her lips then and there, but for Robby and Benjy in the rear.

Whether it was that night or another that, oblivious of the boys, lagging far behind, Josiah's arm found a natural resting-place round the girl's slim waist, and set a red seal on the new compact at the gate when he left, nothing transpired indoors, unless Lydia's heightened colour and suffused eyes told their own glad tale.

It was not a secret for long keeping. Before the week was out, both families were in possession of it. Josiah wrote to Davy. Mrs. Longmore was in high feather, and Thomas smoked an extra pipe over the news.

Benjy, in his elation, wrote again to Mary, trusting his letter to Tim the carter for delivery. The epistle, full of eulogiums of their sister's new sweetheart, went with a curtsey to Mrs. Wainwright to be read.

Mary, who handed it to her mistress with fear of some new disaster on her countenance, brightened as she listened. 'Hegh, missis! but 'Siah is a good chap. He'll tak' care on them all. I'm downreight glad. I wishes I could write an' tell them. But there,'—and she seemed to gulp down her disappointment,—'they mun guess how glad I am.'

'Would you try your best to learn if some one taught you to write?' asked Mrs. Wainwright; for Mary, though sobered of late, was inclined to be frisky.

'Hegh! wouldn't I?' was the answer, from a mouth wide open as the eyes.

'Wilfred, do you think Rayner would mind giving Mary a few lessons in writing and spelling? I daresay he could spare an hour one or two nights a week,' said Mrs. Wainwright to her husband, as he sat beside her and a cosy fire, with his arm over her chair-back, that evening, watching her busy fingers as she hemmed a fine cambric frill to decorate a shirt-front. She had already told him of Mary's letter and its contents.

Rayner was a booking-clerk in the renovated mill, a good penman, and a smart young fellow as times went.

'Well, Kate, I can ask him, if you are not afraid he will teach her something more than reading and writing. I don't think *he* will raise any objection.'

'Nonsense! What ideas you men do get into your heads! Mary's a mere child; will not be sixteen until next January. Don't you remember she told us her age when she came?'

He smiled. 'Nay, I have had more to remember than a nursemaid's age; and so, I should think, had you. But girls grow into women, Kate. You were but sweet sixteen when I met you first, a shy young miss all smiles and blushes'—

'Well, but, Wilfred,' interrupted she, 'that is not an answer. I could send her to the schoolmaster, but I don't like her going into the village after dark. It's not safe for a pretty girl like Mary.'

'And you think it's safer to bring a young sweetheart to her than let her pick one up for herself, do you?'

'I think a young man of his age is likely to have found his sweetheart already. But if not, there can be no great harm done; and we may trust Janet to keep a sharp eye on them.'

'If that is your theory, Kate, so be it. You are the commandant of this garrison, you know; I command only at the fortress down below.'

'Hush, Wilfred! Do not recall the horrors of that night. Pray God such need of fortification or commanders come never again to disturb our happiness. Here comes Mr. Marston for his game at chess. I hear his footsteps on the path. It sounds like a march.'

Mr. Wainwright had observant eyes; nothing escaped him. The alacrity with which the young clerk surrendered his evening hours to setting copies and guiding fingers, repudiating

payment, quite justified his previous observation, and he bade his wife take the responsibility.

'Quite content,' said she, 'with Janet on guard.'

So did Mary and her capable teacher appear content. He prefaced his lessons by answering Benjy's letter. But a girl who can barely spell out a monosyllable is not taught to read and write in a hurry, however diligent she may be, when she has only an hour or two a week for instruction. And by the time she was able to write a letter for herself, she had learned more than penmanship, and had news of her own to convey.

But this is running far ahead, and although a new and brighter day seemed to have dawned for them all, they could not forget all the trouble and terror Luddism had brought to them.

And, although Luddism in Yorkshire was virtually strangled with George Mellor and his followers at York, five years elapsed before Luddism was finally extinguished in the Midlands.

Yet, although it furnished convict-ships and gallows with men meant for better things, Joe Wrigley, the wirepuller, twice arrested on suspicion, contrived to wriggle out of legal clutches, as is too often the case.

Sowden and Walker took their share of the reward and vanished. It was not safe for either to brave the Ludds' death penalty for a broken oath.

Two years later, when Mr. Wainwright's bravery had been recognised, and his loss repaid manifold by a handsome and voluntary subscription of mill-owners and gentry throughout the county, amounting to some thousands of pounds, and when Mr. Joseph Radcliffe's active magistracy had been rewarded with a baronetcy, there was a new sign over a shop door in the spreading town of Huddersfield. It read, 'Longmore and Hartland, Tailors and Drapers.'

There had been some brotherly contest over the order of these names in partnership, but David argued that if he brought the larger share of capital, Josiah had a connection and the solidity of years and experience.

The dilapidated house on the moor was abandoned, for Lydia had become Mrs. Josiah Longmore, and had left the mill, with Robby, who had been put on the shop-board as an apprentice to his new uncle.

Silas came thither for his few holidays, and Benjy, who had Mr. Dacre's full confidence, and was likely to rise in the counting-house, never left his sister and brother-in-law.

They were frugal people, with no expensive tastes whatever, and the business flourished, as was likely, with the patronage of the new baronet, a banker, and two popular mill-owners to give them a start.

About the time that David talked of taking Peter Toft's sister to wife, a summons came for Patty Greenwood to join her repentant husband in Australia.

His evil deeds, his ill-usage were all forgiven. No argument could deter her from her unselfish aim to uphold him in better ways. 'You do not need me now, and he does,' was all her reply. She was quite hopeful when Davy saw her embark at Liverpool.

But years upon years went by without sign or token of either, and nothing was heard until Robin Greenwood was well advanced in years, and Luddism was nigh forgotten in newer clamours.

Then the vicar of Arnold handed over to him securities equivalent to three hundred pounds per annum, sent by a brother clergyman in Australia, repentant John Greenwood's savings, and his legacy to his next of kin. Patty had died before him.

There were other Luddite legacies of which no record has been preserved,—legacies of shame, disgrace, poverty, which clung to the kith and kin of the miserable convicts like a leprosy, until time brought healing; but the Bond Slaves of the fearful oath were never free from its obligations or its dread penalties whilst they walked the earth. The grave closed over them and their evil secrets. That is well kept which no man dare reveal.

THE END.

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